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"COME STEADILY AND CAREFULLY ALONG, AND YOU WILL BE SAFE!" SAID PAOLA.

## THE MISTRESS OF HOLT'S FARM.

### [A NOVELETTE.]

(Concluded.)

#### CHAPTER V.

"All day within the dreamy house  
The doors upon their hinges creak'd;  
The blue fly came in the pane; the mouse  
Behind the mouldering walnut shriek'd,  
Or from the crevices peep'd about.  
Old faces glimmer'd thro' the doors,  
Old footsteps trod the upper floors,  
Old voices called her from without,  
She only said, 'My life is dreary.'"

THE sun was shining out bravely two days later, doing his best to make the bleak country around look its best, when Jabes and his wife arrived at the farm.

The housekeeper was at the door to meet them; and anyone who knew Jabes well would

have seen that he flinched a little under Mrs. Carillon's steady gaze.

However, he had not to endure it very long, for she transferred it to Mrs. Holt, and there was an ominous tightening of the thin lips as she took in all the fair beauty of the young face, and the gracefulness of the lithe, elegantly-attired figure, for Jabes had been liberal in the way of furbelows and frippery for his wife, and her costume showed in every detail.

He wore his homespun, and a greater contrast surely never existed between a married couple than did between these two.

She, fresh, soft, blooming, youthful; he, old, hard, withered, wrinkled. She looking like a lady; he like a son of the people. She the emblem of youth and beauty; he that of ugliness and old age.

Mrs. Carillon felt she could almost—almost, not quite—forgive him the step he had taken, for she knew he had laid up grief and misery for himself in the future.

It was not likely that "Meeces Holt" would

trouble herself much about Jabes when she could have anyone she liked sighing at her feet.

Why, no; certainly not. She would be amply avenged in the future; every pang she had experienced Jabes would feel in a tenfold degree, and she—well, she would look on and gloat over his misery and misfortune.

"Will ye let us have tea at once!" broke in her master's voice, dispelling her train of ideas rather rudely.

"Ay. Will ye ha' it here or in te parlour?"

"Which would you like, my dear?" asked Jabes of the new mistress.

"Oh, here, please," she answered at once, in tones so musical that they astonished one of her listeners, who had never heard anything so sweet before. "This is a delightful room."

"Very well; here, then," ordered Jabes, and Rachel set to work on her duties with a black scowl on her brow.

"Is every room as quaint as this?" asked Paolo, as she made a tour of inspection, noting the tall clock, the Elizabethan press, the beamed

ceiling, the panelled walls, and the dingy portraits.

"Yes, they're all much alike," acknowledged their owner. "Your bed-room is over this, and furnished in to old style. If ye don't like it when ye see it I'll have it all altered, an' ye shall choose for ye self."

"Thank, thanks," returned the young wife, gratefully, for she was touched by his constant desire to please her. "I am sure I shall like it as it is. Old things have a great charm for me."

"Then ye'll ha' plenty o' them here," announced the housekeeper, with sidelong glance at Jabex. "There's nathin' much that can truthfully be ca'd young or fresh here."

Paola was a little surprised at this outbreak, and considerably more when tea was ready to see this rough woman eat herself too, and commence to eat in a voracious fashion.

She made no remark, and took her place at the top of the table behind the blessing urn; and while she manipulated the blue cups she was serenely and happily unconscious that her husband's housekeeper could hardly contain her bitter wrath and rage against her, and that the coarse, horny hands were fisting to snatch up a knife and bury it deep in the soft white throat of the woman whom she considered was usurping her rights, taking the place she had occupied for over twenty years, thrusting her into the back-ground, forcing her to take a second place.

There was some excuse for her soreness, and she wasn't going to be pacified all at once.

"How hays matters bin gettin' on?" inquired Jabex, after awhile, overcoming the reluctance he felt at addressing her in his eagerness to hear that things were well with his cattle and stores.

"Badly enow," she answered with suppressed ferocity. "Can ye expect things to be flourishin' when t' master's eye's not there to overlook t' carls?"

"You've been here," he retorted.

"I'm na to master," she replied, drily.

"An' what's amiss?" he demanded, after a pause.

"Black Bess ha' lost her calf. Slung to soon."

"Ah!" he exclaimed, with evident annoyance.

"Bolling Ben's injured his felloek as bad they dinna think he'll be ony use in t' future. T' snagels ha' all given out."

"Already! They should ha' lasted well till April."

"Mebbe they would ha' done as had ye been here to keep watch on their whose hands are to lavish."

"Well, I wasn't here," he said, testily, "so don't allude to my absence again."

"Na, I won't," she agreed, sullenly, scoring up another grudge to be paid off against him for the rebuke administered before the "dolla."

"Na to onythin' else if ye like."

"Tell me just what's necessary for me to know."

"Well, Haman wants a raise o' wage, and Bend a holiday, and there's an order for hams from Bletchley, an' Peter Royle he were here twa days agone askin' for ye, wantin' to see ye vera much."

"What about, did he say?"

"Na exactly. I s'pose it's money he wants. But he were more'n usual presin'."

"Wonder what he wanted to see me about?" muttered Jabex, an anxious look on his face.

"Ye'll know soon," returned Rachel, her eyes fixed steadily on his troubled face. "He'll come doon when he knows ye're back."

"Yes, I s'pose so."

"An' wha' do ye say to takin' a look round to place now?" she went on, as she rose and commenced removing the tea things with an unnecessary noise and rattle.

"Yes, I'll go, my dear," to his wife, whose foreign name he could never pronounce satisfactorily. "Maybe ye're tired. Would ye like to go to bed?"

"Yes, I should," she answered, appalled at the prospect of being left alone to a life-a-life with her husband's sullen-browed, ill-favoured housekeeper.

"Rachel, show Mrs. Holt to her room, an' I hope ye've made doon a good fire," he remarked, as he left the parlour.

"Ay," she responded, grimly; "it's all folsie and comfort'ble for t' leddy, never fear. She'll ha' nothin' to complain of."

"Perhaps ye'll be as good as to wait till I done this clearin'," she went on a moment later, with a scowl at her mistress.

"Yes, yes," said Paola, quickly, sinking on to a seat in the single nook, and gazing steadily at the fire to avoid the glare of those stony, cruel eyes, that seemed to say,—

"I'd kill you, if I could without fear of being found out."

With a woman's quick and ready tact, she divined the cause of this woman's black looks and scant courtesy of manner, knew that she had aspired to the position Jabex had given her, and her heart sank a little at the prospect of daily—nay, almost hourly—companionship with this woman, for she knew her husband's occupation would keep him from home a great deal, and that she would be left at the mercy of a sullen, disappointed, revengeful boor, who had it in her power to make things uncomfortable for her.

However, she determined to meet her insolence with as much coolness and dignity as she could muster, and when Rachel said, "Now," in her shortest and most repellent manner, and stood candle in hand ready to light her upstairs, she rose quietly, and picking up her farred mantle and hat, followed her conductress up the wide oaken staircase without a word.

"I s'pose this'll hardly suit ye, na half grand enow," snapped the housekeeper, as she proceeded to light the candles in the massive silver candlesticks on the carved dressing-table.

"You are mistaken, it will suit me very well," returned Mrs. Holt, calmly, as she looked round and took in all the details of the quaint room, which, like the one below, was panelled in oak, low celled and cross-beamed, with tapestried chairs, a huge four-post bedstead, elaborately carved, a swing mirror to match on the dressing-table, a linen-chest, evidently of Elizabeth's era, a great time-darkened press that took up nearly half one side of the room, and a noble mantel-piece, above which hung a finely-executed portrait in oils of a very beautiful woman in the riding-dress worn some eighty or ninety years ago, with a large cavalier hat shading her handsome face, and a profusion of chestnut curls falling over her neck and bosom, and reaching below her slender waist.

"I only hope then that ye'll be as well pleased with all t' other arrangements in t' farm, an' that ye wan't find fault with old customs and ways," said Rachel, insolently.

"I have no doubt that I shall be well pleased with most"—Paola laid stress on this word—"of the arrangements of my husband's house. Still, if I choose to make alterations or find fault, I shall do so, as I am mistress here," and having announced this she stood facing the housekeeper, meeting her impertinent gaze with a cool, steady one; and Rachel, finding herself beaten, retired muttering to herself; and when the door closed on her, Paola locked it to guard herself from further intrusion, and then did, what most other women in her position would do, sank on her knees by the bed, and burying her face in her hands wept bitterly.

She felt lonely and depressed, missed the prattle of the little ones and the noises that made the Bloomsbury house seem full of life. Here there was no sound save the scoughing of the March winds as they careered madly in and out amid the twisted chimney-stacks and dashed against the many-paned windows.

Her room looked over the flower-garden, the farm buildings were at the back, so there were none of the sounds heard inseparably from busy country life.

After a time she grew calmer, and, rising, began to inspect the apartment more closely. The glowing fire on the wide tiled hearth diffused a ruddy light around, flashing vividly now and then on some particular object, brought it out distinctly; but the portrait was somewhat in gloom, and she took one of the candlesticks off the dressing-table and held it close to it to get a better view.

Something in the handsome pictured face fascinated her, the eyes, soft, grey, luminous

eyes, thickly black-lashed, seemed full of life and expression as they met hers and held them.

In after days she understood what the spell was they wrought on her; then drowsiness stole over her senses, and, hastily undrobing, she lay down on the great, four-post funeral bed, and was soon asleep.

The first year of Paola's married life was not altogether happy, though it must be acknowledged that the fault was not her husband's. He simply idolized the beautiful woman who had become his, worshipped her with a dog-like fidelity almost painful to behold, and never took his eyes off her face when they were together.

Whatever else he was meant about he was not over his wife. She had what she liked; every wish she expressed was gratified. She could have as many fine clothes as she wished, ask whom she liked to the farm, only there were not many to invite in that sparsely populated part.

He bought a fine piano for her and a phaeton and pair of ponies, and did all he could to please, daily showing, by some act or gift, the strength and truth of his affection.

Still he was jealous, and let her see that he was when there was the slightest, and generally when there was no occasion for it; and the fondness of such a man as Jabex Holt, to such a woman as Paola, was likely to inspire only horror and repugnance. He was coarse, narrow-minded, badly educated. He was no companion for her. Her life was a lonely, isolated sort of one.

True she had invited all the Munros to stay at the farm the summer following her marriage; true that they had all come, and stayed several weeks, brightening and enlivening the place for a while; but then, when they left, the blank desolation and solitude seemed all the greater. True she had entirely escaped from drudgery and hard work, for Jabex would not hear of her doing anything more fatiguing than dusting the Worcester tapestries and Salopian cups, which he had purchased from Royle. Still there were times when she would have been glad of any occupation, no matter how hard, to break the horrible monotony of the hours spent in her north country home.

She interested herself as much as possible in her husband's pursuits, and in all matters appertaining to the farm. Yet there was a void in her life, a longing for something she hardly knew what; a wish that never took actual form or shape, and still was ever haunting her mind and senses; a longing, perhaps, for sympathetic intercourse with some human being like unto herself.

She might well have said with Mariana, "My life is dreary," for she utterly lacked intercourse with people of her own calibre and education.

She had many friends among the four-footed beasts, for when the cows at milking time would come up from the meadows, loud-breathed and blundering, and stand in the mellow glow of the westerling sun, their soft eyes would turn to the spot from whence she came; the balls of yellow down that had the audacity to call themselves ducklings seemed to know her, and would run with the old hen to eat grain from her hauds; one or two pet lambs were always straying about the door, looking for her; while her ponies and the horses would neigh loudly at her approach, and stretch out their satiny necks to ferret inquisitively, and seek for the luscious plume and dainties she brought them; and her spaniel, Master Charles, an intelligent little fellow, with long, silky ears, well-feathered legs and tail, and bright, expressive eyes, simply worshipped her, and followed closely at her heels wherever she went, generally carrying her sunshade, or book, or gloves, or even a handkerchief when he could get nothing else, belonging to his beloved mistress.

## CHAPTER XL

"The bonniest lad that e'er I saw,  
See gallant and as gay a swain;  
Through a' the hauses he did rove,  
And reigned restless king of love."  
"It lies not in our power to love or hate,  
For will in us is overruled by fate."

A SECOND SUMMER wore away. September



came. The heavy golden shocks of wheat were filling the fields, the reapers busy, the children to be seen with their "bearings" following in the track of the great rake, their straw hats decked with poppies, and wild convolvulus; tints of red yellow, and fiery browns were beginning to appear amidst the green array of the trees, which were losing their summer freshness, while the noisy rooks cawed and wrangled in their topmost branches, or unweariedly stalked with extreme gravity through the gleaming, silky-like stubble, searching for living dainties.

"The gentle winds, and slanting sun,  
Bring autumn's pleasant weather;  
The meadow springs on whirling winds  
Among the blooming heather."

The sharp ping of the breech-loader was constantly heard, and report said that mine host of the "Three Ringers" had some ardent sportsmen staying at his quaint little megle inn. This might be so, but the inhabitants of Holt's Farm saw nothing of them, until one afternoon, when a soft south wind wooed the brown fallen leaves, rustling them with tender touch, and blew the clouds away, leaving only a clear azure of sky above, and the golden, steady sunshine making it almost warm as summer, tempted Paola out for a long walk.

Her husband had gone to Bitchley on business, and she felt anything would be preferable to sitting in the dusky parlour with only Meece's Carillon at companion, for her covert insolence roused the Spanish blood in Paola's veins, and made her feel tempted to retort sometimes in a way she knew would be unseemly. So she called Master Charles, and set out for a ramble, riotously preceded by the spaniel.

She went down by the meadows, through Blackman's Spinnery, a lonesome place, with thick undergrowth, and rows of tall, dark firs, and so on till she came to the summit of Panton's Crag.

Absorbed in her own thoughts and the dog's gambols she had noticed little, but now as she looked down from her elevated perch she saw a faint mist drawn across the valley that lay at her feet, and, knowing what it meant, turned and retraced her steps rapidly.

Before she got very far it grew denser, and before she reached the bottom of the hill it was milk white and opaque, its dank breath creeping upward in wreaths of vapour like diaphanous clouds.

Without a moment's hesitation she cut off a long, floating ribbon that decorated her gown, and tying it to the dog's collar uttered the one word "Home."

She knew the sagacious fellow would track his way safely by the aid of that sharp, brown nose, so she felt no fear as he trotted off, leading her, and thus reversing the usual order of things.

On they went, steadily and surely, Master Charles looking like a phantom hound in the mist.

Occasionally the bleat of a lost sheep was heard, or the lowing of a cow unable to find its way to the milking-shed, or the tinkle of a cattle bell; otherwise all was silent, till on the air rang out a shout for help.

For a moment Paola stood as though turned to stone, and then remembering the dangerous bits of bogland that lay about, such fatal traps for unwary strangers, she stooped, and, patting the spaniel's head encouragingly, told him to "Seek, and."

With a sharp yelp he turred off to the right, and his mistress, stepping cautiously, followed him. Again the cry for help rang out, nearer, and when it pealed through the misty air a third time Paola knew she was not ten feet from the lost one.

"Where are you?" she cried, for the dog was going very cautiously.

"Here," answered a deep voice straight before her. "I am sunk two feet in this abominable mud, and can't get free."

"Can't you step forward?" she asked, peering ahead, and making out an indistinct something.

"I don't know. I stopped, because at every step I seemed to sink deeper, and did not know where I was going."

"Can you see me?"

"Faintly."

"Well, step towards me. I am standing on firm ground, and if you have a stick stretch it out, and I will give you a helping pull."

"I have only my gun."

"Is that in the mire?"

"No, I have managed to keep that free, but it is weighting me down."

"Stretch that out; it will be longer and better than a stick," she said, authoritatively.

"It is not loaded," he announced, as with an immense amount of splashing and floundering he strove to get a little nearer his rescuer. "I let both barrels off at a duck, who led me into this pretty predicament."

"Can you stretch out a little further?"

"I am afraid I shall pull you in," he said, as with a mighty plunge he got near enough to shove the stick into her hands.

"No, you won't. Now, come steadily and carefully along, and you will be safe."

The stranger obeyed her, and in a couple of minutes more stood on the firm ground at her side. Master Charles yelping and barking furiously the while.

"How can I thank you?" he questioned, as he stood by her.

"Don't try so, please," she responded.

"I must. You have saved my life."

"Not quite that," she answered, with some confusion.

"I think quite that. This is a lonely spot, and at every attempt to extricate myself I seemed to be sinking deeper into the unknown depths of that uncanny bog."

"It is rather difficult to get out without help," she acknowledged.

"I found it very difficult; in fact, impossible. I suppose people are lost occasionally when no help comes."

"Sometimes," she admitted, reluctantly, and with a little shiver.

"And I should have been, but for your timely aid."

"I hope not. And now, which way do you want to go?" she asked, abruptly.

"I am staying at a little inn called the 'Three Ringers,' about a mile from Bitchley."

"Yes, I know. Home, Charles," and she shook the ribbon to set him going, and said to her companion, "Keep close to me, please."

"But am I taking you out of your way? I cannot do that on such an evening as this, even to save myself from some inconvenience," he asked, eagerly.

"No. My way lies in that direction."

"You are certain? You are not saying this to help a lost stranger, and make things easy for him?"

"No, truly. I live a mile from the 'Three Ringers.' So it is really my way home, too."

"And you trust solely to your dog to guide you?"

"Oh, yes, he is perfectly safe."

"That cunning nose of his stands him in good need on occasions of this sort."

"It does indeed."

"A most valuable and necessary companion in these misty parts."

"Yes. I seldom or never go out unless he accompanies me. I wonder you ventured on a shooting expedition without a dog."

"Well, to tell you the truth, I only arrived at the 'Three Ringers' last night, and as I did not come on a sporting expedition, I brought no dog with me."

"I see. Still, I think Jim Harlowe should not have let a stranger go shooting without a guide."

"I am not exactly a stranger," he returned, with a little laugh.

"No?"

"No. I was here once, ten years ago, staying with some of my mother's relatives. She was a Northumbrian," he explained.

"I see," said Paola, again.

"In fact, I have come now to see them, but I arrived too late to intrude on them last night, and to-day I heard my cousin was from home, so I thought I would go for a day's sport, and

have a big bag to offer for his acceptance to-morrow."

"And instead, you got lost."

"Exactly so, thanks to the mist. Do you have them often?"

"In the autumn and spring rather frequently. It is early for them yet, and there is one good thing, they don't last long."

"That is something."

"It is lightening and lifting now."

"Yes, it seems clearer. Do you know where you are?" he questioned.

"Yes. Near Blackman's Spinnery."

"What a queer name for a place."

"Yes, it is rather funny."

"I suppose there is some story that gives it that title?"

"I believe so. A coloured seaman murdered a shipmate there for the sake of his prize money, and it is said he haunts the place at midnight."

"A gruesome tale. You hardly like to go through it after dusk, I should think."

"I don't mind in the least," she answered, lightly. "I am neither nervous nor superstitious."

"That is well for you."

"Yes. And I have to go through it now. That is your path, you can find your way alone as it is clearing."

"Yes," he answered, as she stopped, and the mist clearing in earnest he looked at her keenly, and she at him, and as their eyes met each felt a thrill. Something about his grey orbs and chestnut locks seemed familiar to her, while he thought he had never seen anything more lovely than her face, for the exertion had brought a rose flush to the usually pale cheeks, which gave an added lustre to the sapphire eyes.

"Good-bye," she said.

"Good-bye," he echoed, baring his curly head in her honour. "May I not know—"

But he was speaking to the almost leafless trees and the bracken and the undergrowth—his late companion had glided away, with a swift, graceful motion that soon took her from the range of his sight.

Jabes had only just come in when his wife reached the farm, but he was already making preparations to go out and seek for her, and his face cleared visibly as he saw her.

"Were ye lost?" he asked, laying his heavy hand on her shoulder, with a gesture meant to be caressing.

"Not exactly lost," she answered. "Charles is too good a guide for any fear of that when he is with me."

"I was anxious, and just comin' to look for ye."

"Nought was never in danger," muttered Rachel, spitefully, as she banged a plateful of "singing hinnies" down on the table, with a force that sent the cakes flying to the four corners.

"You need never be when I have the spaniel with me."

"He's a good fellow, and a wonderful nose for scent."

"Yes, he seemed to track the way home quite easily."

"I am glad I bought him for ye. Ye must promise me never to go out without him."

"I promise," answered his wife.

"That's right," and he stooped his grizzled head, and kissed the lips, that were his by right, again and again.

But when Paola was released from that embrace, the bright, girlish colour had all fled from her face, she was ashy pale, and looked older and more womanly, while the lines about her lips had deepened.

Next morning, at a somewhat early hour, Jim Harlowe's handsome guest left "The Three Ringers," and walked through the wood to Blackman's Spinnery. He paused there at the exact spot where he parted from his fair guide the previous night, and then sauntered slowly up towards Holt's Farm, through the meadows, where the kine were grazing, standing knee-deep in the cool ponds, through the quaint old-world garden, with its late roses and myriophylloids sweetly scenting the air, to the porch. He

tered sans ceremonie, neither knocking nor ringing, and made for the parlour.

He expected to find James Holt there, but the farmer was not in the parlour. He only saw a tall female figure in a white gown, with deep blood-red roses at the throat and belt, standing before the wide fire-place, with down-bent head, crowned with dusky plaits, and loosely entwined fingers.

The attitude was one of despondency or deep thought, he could not tell which, and feeling he was intruding he turned to go, but struck his foot against a chair and came to a standstill on the threshold as the woman lifted her head, and he recognised his companion of yesterday.

"I—I—really beg your pardon," he faltered. "I came to see my cousin James, and walked in without ceremony, as I thought I should find him here."

"Don't go," as he turned away. "If you want to see him particularly at once I will send for him."

"It does not matter, I can come another time," returned the young man, wondering how on earth this beautiful, elegant woman came into his rough cousin's home.

"He is sure to be in at one to dinner."

"Oh, I won't intrude on you till that time. I will go to him if you will tell me where he is."

"You would not be intruding," she returned, "and I am sure you must be Claud Harley."

"I am he," he agreed, eagerly. "How do you know?"

"From the portrait of your grandmother upstairs."

"Am I so very like her?" he queried.

"The exact counterpart as far as colouring and eyes are concerned. Your features are larger, but I should have known you directly from the likeness."

"Did you know me last night?" he demanded, coming nearer.

"The light was so uncertain I could not see you plainly. Still, your face seemed strangely familiar," she answered.

"You see my grandmother's portrait often, then?"

"Two or three times every day. It hangs in my room."

"And you are—"

"Your cousin, James Holt's wife."

"Ah!"

He came nearer still, and looked at her as she spoke. He saw then the lines about her mouth and the weary curve it had, and knew she had suffered since her marriage with James—suffered as only a highly-refined, sympathetic woman can when brought into close contact with a boor, and tied to him for life. He knew not her reason for wedding him, but he saw she had paid a heavy price for any comforts he gave her.

"You did not know that he was married, possibly," she said, after a somewhat embarrassed pause.

"I did not know it. I never heard of it. I have been abroad for some years."

"That accounts for it, then."

"Yes."

"Did it never strike you he would marry?" she asked this because she knew he was the heir-at-law, and she was painfully conscious that she would share the fortune with him that might have been all his.

"Yes. I thought it was merely a question of time. I did not think, though, that he would marry you, or such a woman as you are."

"No."

She flashed at his words, and their eyes met; his, full of deep admiration, mingled with astonishment; hers, cloudy with shame and constraint.

"You are not like the women the Holts generally choose for their wives."

"Neither was your grandmother."

"True. She was a Pole, and not a plebeian."

"Ah!"

It was Paola's turn to say it, and she said it feeling more keenly than ever she had before the degradation of her union with the old north country farmer.

"Do you wish to join my husband?" she said,

bravely, conquering her feelings. "He is in the north meadow."

"No, thanks. It is half-past twelve now. If I wait here I shall see him soon enough, without much exertion."

"Yes. But will you excuse me? I have one or two things to do."

"Household things, may I ask?"

"Not exactly household things. I have many pets among the animals"—how Claud pitied her as she spoke; her words told such an unconsciously and story of a life cut off from human intercourse and sympathy—"whom I visit daily. I am going to see them now."

"May I come, too?" he asked, eagerly.

"Certainly, if it won't bore you."

"Bore me! There is nothing I should like better," he declared.

And together they passed out into the brilliance of the September day, and visited the ponies, and the iron-grey mare with her tiny foal, and the prize Alderney—Black Bea, and the chicks and ducklings, and a lamb who had broken its leg; and for one and all James Holt's wife had a caress and a tender word, which the animals seemed to appreciate.

When they returned they found James waiting for them in the parlour. He seemed half-pleased and half-displeased at his cousin's advent; cast one or two envious and suspicious glances at him, granted some complaints against his long sojourn in "furrin parts," and finally asked him to stay to dinner, and told him he must bring up his "traps" from the "Three Ringers," and stay at the farm for awhile.

Both of which invitations Claud accepted eagerly, for his cousin's wife charmed him as no woman had ever charmed him before, filled his whole being with a vague unrest, a great longing, as he watched her flitting to-and-fro, like and graceful, her white gown glancing like a ray of light as it swept the dusky floor; and her voice—there was a dangerous sweetness in her tones, which took shades and variations as she spoke to him during dinner of subjects that were high Dutch to the old farmer and the ill-favoured housekeeper, who glared and scowled at the two beautiful young people as though she could have killed them with pleasure by her black glances, and Claud, as he gazed at the exquisite, statue-like profile of his hostess, unknown to himself, was as much in love with her as a man possibly can be with a woman of whose existence he has only known twenty-four hours.

## CHAPTER VII.

"My own bright love, whose fairest face  
Of all fair womankind,  
Hath found in my heart that sacred place  
Another can never find."

CLAUD's "traps" were duly brought over from the Inn, and he took up his abode at the farm, to his own intense delight, and that of Rachel Carillon, who saw breakers ahead, and much trouble in the future for James, and who rejoiced accordingly, with a most unholy delight, while she narrowly watched the young couple, thus thrown into such close and perilous companionship, with keen eyes to detect the first signs of love between them.

Claud was handsome as Antinous, James ugly as a Vulcan; the former highly educated, clever, accomplished, fascinating; the latter ill-read, rough, uncouth, repellent.

Anyone could see which way things would go, and how the woman, debarred for nearly two years from intercourse with congenial spirits, would turn and cling to this man, whom fate had thrown in her path, and who was in every way calculated to please the mind and eye, and formed such a striking contrast to the man to whom she was tied.

In truth, after Harley came to the farm, the days seemed to speed by on winged feet to Paola. The void in her life was filled, the longing of her heart satisfied in full, the dreary hours of painful monotony over.

There was always something to be done, something to be seen, something to be planned. He

was a bit of a painter, and would take his easel down to the edge of the wood, or white gate leading to the spinney, and sketch the prettiest views, and sometimes he would put the pencil into her slender fingers and show her how to trace a tree or limn a vista of hills and vales.

Then they visited all the points of interest in the neighbourhood together, and revisited the quagmire where they had first met, always accompanied by Master Charles who attached himself warmly to the visitor.

Then there were the evenings growing long now, full of a subtle, intangible, little understood charm to these two, when they sang together, his tenor notes blending well with her low, rich ones, and old James would beat time with his fingers as the melody filled the room, and Rachel would cast queer and sinister glances at all three from her seat in the ingle nook, where she usually sat with her basket of mending, and all went well and happily, for the farmer was busy, so busy that he had not much time to give rein to his usual jealous fears when he saw any man address his wife.

He had recently purchased "A sight o' beavers," some of which he meant to fatten to send up to the cattle-show, and he was so full of this that he couldn't think of anything else, and as to Meecese Carillon whatever she thought she would rather have bitten out her tongue than have given utterance to one word which might have opened his eyes, and shown him the breakers and rocks ahead. No; she kept silent. Her time was coming, when she could pay back James every pang he had inflicted on her with tenfold interest, jeer and jibe him, humble him to the dust. So she waited and watched, and was amiably attentive in a bearish, cross kind of way to Claud, and was strangely civil to her mistress. She was ever ready to pack the luncheon basket with dainties for them, to suggest pretty spots to visit, to make excuses to James for their occasional absence from the midday meal, and generally to constitute herself their champion and protector.

"Ye ha' na' shown Master Harley the Bullen Rock yet, Meecese Host," she said one morning as she cleared away the breakfast things, and heard them discussing what they should do and where they should go.

"It is rather a long way," returned Paola.

"A matter o' five miles."

"Quite that, and it is impossible to drive to it."

"Ye can manage ten miles there and back, and as to Master Harley he can do that and more."

"Well, yes, Rachel, I think I am equal to that number of miles," he agreed, a slight smile curving the handsome mouth, which the tawny moustache shaded like the sweep of a bird's wing.

"Well, ye ha' better go."

"Is it worth seeing?"

"Yes, it is very curious!" acknowledged Paola.

"Then we will go. We can start at once."

"But we cannot possibly get back in time for dinner, and as I was away yesterday, James will think I ought to be home to-day," she objected.

"Never ye mind that," said Rachel, eagerly. "Master's gone to see to the new buildin' in to North Meadow, and I'll send him down his dinner, and word that I'm cleanin' here. This room wants it bad, it's a world o' time since it had a real good clean," casting an eye around on the spotless furniture.

"That settles it then," cried Claud, quickly, loth to lose several hours spent alone with this woman who was becoming only too dear to him. "It would be a pity to spend such a glorious day indoors. Pack up the basket for us, Rachel, and we'll be off."

The housekeeper obeyed with alacrity, and Paola, getting her hat, they started away.

"Afraid of your complexion!" he queried, laughingly, as they strolled through the garden, gay with chrysanthemums and late blooms.

"No; why?" she asked, gazing up at him with her soft, velvety eyes.

"You have such a huge hat on," looking at



the broad-brimmed Leghorn. "It leaves hardly any of your face visible to the public gaze."

"That does not matter."

"So you think. I may be of a different opinion."

"You can see the roses, they are much nicer to look at."

"You picked those this morning!"

"Yes."

"And wear this particular hat to show them off."

"Exactly so."

"What vanity!"

"I don't see that there is any vanity in that."

"Of course not. I shall expect you to give them to me to-night. Will you?"

His voice was tremulous as he made the request, but she did not notice it, nor the passionate look in his grey eyes, for she did not know how much she was to him, nor how dearly he would prize a few flowers worn in her breast or hat.

"You can have them if you wish, but they will be rather faded."

"That does not matter."

"There are some more in the conservatory," she added, innocently.

"I know; but I would rather have those," nodding at the dead-white blooms, that decorated the Leghorn.

"Very well. Is it not lovely to-day, so fresh, and yet sunny and mild?"

"Delightful, only we won't find it quite so delightful here," they were just entering the spinney. "This place always seems damp and cold, even on the hottest day."

"Yes, it is rather gruesome," and she gave a little shudder as her eyes fell on some orange fungus, streaked with deep red, as if blood had soaked into it.

"Horrible after sunset to the superstitious."

"Yes, these tall trees shut out all light, only a gleam of moonlight steals through the tranches here and there, making the place look weird and ghostly."

"Not much frequented by the country folk?"

"No, especially after dark, and hardly at all in the daytime. It has a bad name."

"A good rendezvous for clandestine lovers. I am glad we are free of it," as they stepped out once more from the shadow of the dark trees, into the warmth and glow and brilliance of the October day.

"Are we far from the rock now?" he asked, after they had walked a considerable distance.

"No. Do you see that field straight ahead?"

"Yes."

"We must go through that, then down some steps in the face of the cliff, and we are there."

"What a queer place!" exclaimed Claud, as they reached the seashore and proceeded to explore the huge rock, nearly a hundred feet high, with its strange caves, and projections, worn by the washing and fretting of the restless sea.

"We had better sit down here, and admire it from a safe distance," suggested Paola, "the tide is coming up, and it will soon be surrounded."

"And there is much to admire," said the young man, as he flung himself down on the sand, that sparkled like diamond dust, at her feet, and watched the rainbow play of colours on the dancing waves, the wondrous shadows on the azure sky, the silvery mist in the caves as the advancing waters dashed against the rocks, and threw the spray high in the air, and coquetted with the stranded coils of red and bronze sea-weed, and many-hued pebbles and shells, that glowed like opals and pearls in the brilliant sun rays.

It was an enchanting scene, a perfect seagods' retreat, bright with the treasures of the deep.

"Enchanted world! enchanted hour!"

He felt the spell of it strongly as he lay there, just where he could see the beautiful face of his companion, and drink in all its rare love-name. He could have stayed there for hours, in a dreamy state of rapture, only Paola asking if he didn't want some luncheon roused him, and he set to work to unpack the basket.

"Rachel has improved very much since I last saw her," he observed, as he drew out the dainties. "I mean as to manner," he added, quickly. "In appearance she is just as detestable as ever."

"Yes. She is not quite so rough, and uncouth. When I first came to the farm her manner was both, unbearably insolent."

"There may have been a reason for that," he remarked, with a significant little laugh.

"I think there was," acknowledged Paola.

"She wanted to be Mrs. Jabez."

"Yes."

"What a disappointment for her. How could she think any man would espouse her, unless he was blind?"

"She may not be aware of her short-comings in the way of looks."

"Perhaps not, and so she made it uncomfortable for you on your arrival at the farm."

"Yes," this with a heavy sigh, and a weary droop of the red lip.

"Made things worse than they would otherwise have been."

"I think so."

"And any way, you would not have been very happy?" with a keen glance at her face.

"I got very. You see my life was a lonely one," she added, quickly, and apologetically. "I was accustomed before I came here to such a large family that it made a great difference."

"And latterly it has been better?"

"Oh, yes, since you came I have been perfectly happy, perfectly content." She accompanied this innocent confession with an unconsciously tender look at him which set him thinking deeply. It had been dawning on him for some time that he cared more for his cousin's wife than he ought, that she held a place in his heart another could never find there; but he had hoped though he was to suffer alone, he had not dreamt of the danger to her, dreamed that she would love him also. Now that he knew her happiness was in danger, he felt honour demanded that he should go, pass out of her life as quietly and quickly as he could, leaving her to forget him if that were possible, and return to her allegiance to Jabez.

But could he do it! Would he have the strength to wrench himself free from the spell she had all unwittingly cast over him? To go away and never look on the fair, faultless face again! He hardly knew as he walked back silently at her side through the fallen autumnal leaves that carpeted the ground thickly with russet and brown and gold. Yet he must try one week more of happiness, of mad, foolish, even wicked happiness, and then—then he would turn his back on Holt's Farm and Jabez's wife for ever and aye.

## CHAPTER VIII.

"Through paths unknown  
Thy soul hath flown.  
To seek the realms of woe:  
Where fiery pain  
Shall purge the stains  
Of actions done below."

THE week passed, and still Claud lingered, sunning himself in the smiles and presence of the woman he loved "not wisely but too well." He found it harder than he had thought to go away and leave her, with the knowledge that never again might he look on her sweet, pale face, never hear the music of her voice.

October gave place to November. The days grew shorter, the veil of mist that lay over the valleys lifted only for an hour or two, and towards evening grew dense and dark. Claud often went out shooting, making that the excuse for absenting himself from the farm at that time of day when he knew Paola would be alone, for he hardly dared trust himself in her presence unless others were by; he feared some of the love that surged in his heart so madly would rise to his lips and betray him.

He seldom went alone though. Master Charles, by his mistress's wish, accompanied him, and brought him safely home through the fogs, over bogland and quagmire.

One evening when the mists had been more

than usually dense and misleading, on his arrival at the farm, he found Paola waiting for him at the porch, straining her eyes in the gathering gloom to catch the first glimpse of him.

The hall behind her was full of a warm, cheerful glow, and a half suggestion of good things preparing for the evening meal floated out on the air.

"Ah! You are safe," she cried, as he appeared, with an accent of intense relief.

"Yes. Did you think I was lost?"

"You are later than usual."

"Ten minutes," looking at the sentry-box clock, as he deposited his gun in a corner of the parlour.

"Only that! It seemed an age to me."

"Ah!"

Claud only gave utterance to that one word, but he felt that the time had come when he no longer dared dally, and must go, and the thought kept him strangely silent at tea, and drew down on his head a string of coarse chaff from Jabez as to his want of success in the field.

He answered the gibes at random, for he knew it would be a hard task to tell Paola that he must go, and he was afraid to tell her before the others, lest she might betray the true state of her feelings in the suddenness of her disappointment.

Fortune favoured him though. After the meal was over the farmer went to see one of the "beeves" that was sick, and Rachel to superintend some work in the kitchen, and he was left alone with his hostess.

She stood in the ingle nook, the ruddy glow of the fire bathing her in its radiance, making the jet beads on her gauzy black gown sparkle and glint. The unrelieved blackness of her toilet suited her, and enhanced the pale purity of her complexion, and the man standing at her side felt every moment that he was growing more in love with this woman with the sapphire eyes and dusky braids.

"Paola," he said, at last, and even to his own ears his voice sounded strange and harsh, "My holiday in the 'North Country,' is nearly at an end."

"What do you mean!" she asked, quickly, lifting her eyes to his.

"I mean that I am going away."

"Claud!" She put out her hand, and into the blue orbs came such a look of anguished pain that his heart smote him bitterly.

"Business—urgent," he muttered, not knowing what to say, for her lips even were white.

"I must go."

"You—cannot—mean it. Cannot be so cruel—as to—leave me!"

"I must," he reiterated, firmly.

"I cannot let you go!" she cried, despairingly, turning suddenly round and clapping her hands on his arm, and as she moved her thin dress swept the bars and was alight in an instant.

She was unconscious of it; he saw it, and with a startled exclamation stooped, and, catching the flaming skirt, crushed it out after a short, sharp struggle with his hands.

For an instant they stood looking at each other, held apart by some unknown influence, then as she noted his scorched, blackened hands, she seized them and pressed her lips to them, and at the touch of her mouth, he lost his self-control, and flinging his arms about her held her close to his breast, while he rained down kisses on her aching face, with half-cruel, despairing passion again and again.

"My darling! my love! Look up! speak to me!" he implored, for her head lay heavily on his bosom when he lifted his lips from hers, and she seemed almost lifeless. "Look up, darling! You are not hurt!"

But no answer came to his pleadings, and he laid her gently in a chair, and knelt before her, chafing the cold, listless hands, and covering them with kisses.

"Paola," he whispered, as the eyelids fluttered and unsealed, "are you better! You startled me terribly."

"Yes, I am better!" she answered, wearily, and then cried, "Oh, Claud!" and, leaning forward, rested her head on his shoulder.

"My darling! can you ever forgive me?" he murmured. "What have I done! what have I done! ruined your existence!"

"Nay, not that!" she interrupted, lifting one hand to smooth his curly locks tenderly and softly.

"I should never have spoken, never have uttered one word of the love I felt! I have done you a great wrong."

"Nay, no wrong; or, if any, I forgive you!" she answered, looking into his eyes with a light in hers that fairly dazzled him. "I love you better than my own soul, than any hope of the present or future! Do not be sorry for your words, which have given me a glimpse of your heart, your true feelings towards me!"

"I cannot be sorry if you are not," he returned, fondly, again drawing her to his breast; "only there is your future. You might have been happy but for me."

"Happy but for you!" she exclaimed, with passionate fervour. "Why, it is you who have given me the only happiness I have ever known! Think of the blank dreariness of my life before you came, and the full, rich joy of it since! I can face any future now, with the memory of those sweet days to console me. Nothing can rob me of that!"

"My dear one! how much you care for me!" he said, remorsefully, gazing at the pale, lovely face on his breast.

"You have my whole heart!" she answered, simply.

"And I do not deserve it. I have treated you shamefully! Oh! if I could only undo the mischief I have wrought!" and the hands that held hers so closely shook as though he had theague.

"I would not have it otherwise," she murmured, softly, "now—now that I know you care for me!"

"Care for you! My soul, my life, are wrapped up in you! My darling! my sweet! how shall I exist without you! How go back to the old way of living!"

"And—we must part!"

Her voice was full of tears as she put the question.

"Alas! yes! Honour leaves us no other course. I must go away and leave you. Try to redeem my character in your eyes, for I feel you must despise me."

"Despise you, Claud!" She lifted her head, and looked at him again; then, with a little movement of unutterable love and confidence, twined her hands round his. "Why, I worship you! If there is any fault it is mine, not yours. I have been unguarded, unwomanly, you all that is noble and true!"

"Oh, Paula! how your words stab me!" he cried, in anguish. "I feel so unworthy, so utterly base! No man ever treated a woman worse than I have treated you. What misery I have laid up in the future for you! what sorrow! what unavailing regret!"

"I forgive all that!" she interrupted. "The joy has outweighed the pain. It is better to have lived and loved than never to have loved at all! I feel that I would not for years, centuries of misery, forego the knowledge that you love me even as I love you!" she went on, passionately. "In my dreams it will all come to me again! I shall feel your kisses on my lips, your breath on my brow, your arms around me, and your voice whispering in my ears! Would I lose that, think you, for anything else on earth!"

"My own!" he murmured, again kissing the red mouth temptingly near his own.

"And now I must leave you," he said, after a long pause, full of a silent, if sad, bliss to both.

"Stay a little longer," she prayed, raising her passionate, entreating eyes to his.

"I cannot, dearest! I must think of your future."

"And—and—shall we never meet again?" in faltering accents.

"Once more—at breakfast to-morrow. I must avoid exciting the suspicions of others. Then we part for ever in this world."

He rose from his kneeling posture as he spoke,

and stood before her, the grand grey eyes full of passion, remorse, and regret.

"Claud, you break my heart," she moaned.

"If I were only free!"

"What can I do, my dear one!" he questioned, hopelessly. "You are not free."

"Stay with me!"

And she clung to him convulsively, with faint, broken entreaties, which pained the man who loved her deeply, but could not deter him from his purpose.

"Good-bye," he murmured, losing the clinging hands; and without another look he left her.

She remained standing before the fire, her face rigid and ashen white, her eyes dilated, her hands hanging listlessly by her side; and so Jabez found her an hour later when he came in from the yard.

"What ails thee, lass!" he queried, anxiously.

But she could not answer, only raised her hand to her throat, as if she were choking.

"Ha, ye been startled by the burnin' o' ye gown?" he questioned next, as his eyes fell on the charred skirts.

She nodded an assent.

"Ye're not hurt?" with painful eagerness.

She shook her head; speech was impossible.

"Then ye'd better get to bed, dearie. Ye'd be better there."

Paula did not need a second bidding. Mechanically she crept out of the room, and felt her way upstairs like one blind and dazed.

"Your mistress looks very ill. Was she much startled at her gown gettin' alight?" asked Jabez when he was alone with Rachel.

"I dinna think it's the gown bein' burnt as is the matter wi' her," returned the housekeeper, who had been eavesdropping, and knew what had passed between the ill-starred lovers.

"What is it, then?" he demanded, sharply, for something in the woman's tone and manner struck him as curious.

"Ye should ask yerself that, and perhaps ye'd ken."

"What do you mean?" he cried, angrily.

"I mean," she returned, with a sardonic smile, "that if I were an old man wi' a young hiny o' a wife, that I would na' ask bonny laddies to stay at my hame, and then leave them alone to bill and coo as they pleased."

"Do ye mean to say my wife has been love-making with Master Harley?" he queried, furiously.

"I say nathin'," she replied, contentiously. "Silence is golden. Keep yer ain eyes open and judge for yerself."

And she departed, leaving Jabez in a state of rage and jealousy that defies description.

He could hardly contain his wrath till morning, and opened out at the object of it the moment he entered the parlour.

Paula, pale and silent, was in her usual place behind the tea-urn, and Rachel was buttering hob-cakes and furtively watching the others.

"Are ye thinkin' o' leavin' soon, Master Harley?" inquired Jabez, grimly, of his guest.

"Why? Yes," answered Claude, looking at him in surprise. "I'm going to-day."

"That's right," returned his host; "an' it's well ye intend to go."

"Why?"

"Because if ye had na' gone to-day I should ha' turned ye out neck and crop."

"Jabez!" exclaimed the young man.

"Ah! ye may Jabez me, but I'll keep my wife to myself, an' go shares in her with nobody."

"You forget yourself in speaking in such a way before her," said Claud, sternly.

"No, I don't. 'Tis ye ha' done that, mistakin' other people's property for yer own, an' treatin' it as such, ye scoundrel."

"Jabez!" implored Paula, faintly.

"An' wha' ha' ye got to say, ma'am!" facing her furiously.

"He is our guest," she murmured.

"An' are ye not ashamed to speak up for ye're lover, ye shameless hussy!"

And then followed a torrent of abuse, and such coarse language as the shrinking woman's

ears had never listened to before, and which filled her with unspeakable horror.

"You ruffian!" said Claud, with supreme contempt, "to use such language to any woman, much less your wife."

"I daresay ye wish she was yours!" sneered the farmer.

"I do," returned Harley, coolly. "I could appreciate her as you never can, or will, for she is far above you!"

"An' you wish she was free, doubtless!"

"I do. I would marry her at once if she were."

"An' de ye think I'm going to listen to this kind o' talk in my own house!" with an awful oath. "Get out, or I'll do ye some damage," and the horny hand closed ominously over a knife.

"I have no wish to stay since it is your house," and with one look full of pity and concern at Paula, Claud turned away, and went out into the misty November day.

Life for Paula was hard, indeed, in the days that followed. Her husband never addressed her without prefixing a horrible oath to his speech, Meecass Carillon was insolent, over-bearing, and triumphant; her mind was full of doubt and perplexity; and to crown all she was kept a sort of prisoner, and her actions somewhat closely watched.

She had received a line from Claud the day he left, brought by one of the dairymaids, who loved her mistress as much as she hated the housekeeper, asking her to meet him in Blackman's Spinney any evening she could get out, and saying he would be there from eight to nine every night till he saw her.

Five nights went by, and she could not manage to slip out from her prison. On the sixth, as she sat by the ingle nook, watching the leaping flames with saddened eyes, she heard the noise of loud voices in altercation, and Rachel went to investigate the matter.

It appeared Peter Royle, now an absolute beggar, had come to the farm to ask a little charity from the man who had helped to ruin him; and Jabez, sullen and still smarting under the sense of his wrongs, had refused him in brutal and infuriating terms even a meal or a tankard of ale.

Holt passed out to his well-stocked yard after throwing the last cutting gibe at the unfortunate man; but Royle, well-nigh starved, lingered on the threshold, and Rachel, sending the maids about their business took upon herself to invite him into the kitchen, and gave him a plentiful meal of cold meat, and piled him well with ale and fiery whiskey, finally winding up her good acts by presenting him with a packet of letters, old and yellow with age, which he read; and while he read the expression of his face changed from that of a human being to that of a ferocious, wild animal thirsting for blood, and the expression was still there when he left the farm, and wandered away no one knew where.

Meantime Paula, finding herself free from espionage, had slipped out and was speeding down through the meadows to Blackman's Spinney as fast as her feet could carry her, regardless of the chill November air, which ruffled her tresses, and played hide-and-seek with her gown.

It was a clear night for the time of year, and the moon was up, round and full. In the Spinney its light only fell here and there in oblique, silvery patches, but it was enough to show the panting woman the figure of her lover leaning against a tree. He had evidently been out shooting, for his gun leant beside him.

"My darling!" he exclaimed, opening his arms, and clasping the slender form in them as she approached, "you managed to get out at last, then!"

"Yes," she murmured, wearily, laying her head on his breast.

"And—has he been very cruel to you?"

"Horrible!" she returned with an involuntary shudder.

"The brute! I could kill him,"—the young man's hands clenched convulsively as he spoke, and his brow darkened—"and I can't save you!"



"No; I must face my fate."  
 "How I blame myself, and how you will curse the day on which you first saw me!"  
 "Nay," she answered, gently, "how I shall bless it."  
 "You love me so much, sweet!" he questioned, fondly.

"So very much that I would not have it otherwise."

"If you were only free," he groaned, "how happy we might be together!"

"Ah, we must not think of that," she said, quickly, "it will unnerve us for facing our hard future," and then she commenced to sob convulsively, while her whole frame shook, for the sobs were born of utter despair.

"My own, do not grieve so," he said, tenderly, drawing his handkerchief out and wiping away the fast-falling tears. "It pains me inexpressibly, and I am so helpless I cannot aid you."

"No. No one can help me."

"How hard it seems that you must go back to that ruffian who will ill-use you now, and leave me who idolise you."

"It is hard; still I look on it as a punishment for the sin I have committed. I, another man's wife, had no right to love you. I struggled against it, but my passion for you conquered, and now I pay the penalty," and she burst into a fresh flood of tears.

"Don't, don't!" he implored, and dropping the handkerchief he drew her closer to him, and kissed away the tears with his burning lips.

"What was that?" asked Paola, fearfully. "Something seemed to stir in the undergrowth."

"A rabbit, probably."

"No, it was more than that; I heard breathing. I must go back, Claud. If he misses me he will come out and kill us both," with an irrepresible shudder.

"Must you go so soon?"

"I dare not stay longer. Good-bye!"

"You will write to me sometimes!" he pleaded.

"No," she answered, firmly; "we must not even have that consolation."

"Oh, Heaven! how shall I bear my life!" groaned the man.

"Try to be happy for my sake, Claud," she whispered; and with one long, clinging kiss, she escaped from his arms and sped away up to the house—a dark, shadowy form.

She found the parlour untenanted, and with a sigh of relief sank into the chair before the ingle-nook, and gave herself up to her sad and despairing thoughts.

She never knew how long she sat there; it might have been ten minutes, it might have been an hour. She had hardly noticed the entrance of the housekeeper, who sat down opposite, and occupied herself with some needlework, when the faint report of a gun was heard.

"Did you hear that?" she questioned, in alarm, a strange sensation of fear at her heart.

"Poachers," returned Rachel, laconically.

"I don't think so," and she rose and drew the curtains aside, but could see nothing.

Half-an-hour later there was the sound of swift, running feet, and a man's voice was heard calling loudly for "Mecceus Carillon."

The woman rose at the first sound and went out, a strange look on her pallid face, and Paola heard the man say in hoarse tones,—

"You're wanted down at the Spinney, Mecceus."

"For what?"

"Master's shot and done for."

"You're a fool, Benji Craig."

"I'm no fool; 'ts master's lyin' in 'ts Spinney, shot in 'ts head, and Haman's watchin' him while I came on for lights and thigs."

"Ah!"

The woman's voice sounded strange and faint. Then there was a clatter and noise of many tongues, and through it all Paola stood as if turned to stone, till silence reigned once more around; and then, with a sudden start, she flew out down the meadows to the place where so lately she had met her lover; and there, by the light of the lanterns held by the farm-servants, she saw her husband lying face downwards amid

the tawny fungus, that was taking deeper hues from the crimson stream that welled from an ugly hole in his head, and in his tightly-clenched right hand was a white cambric handkerchief.

## CHAPTER IX.

"All my heart weeps with the branches,  
 Walls with the wall of the boughs;  
 Only a low slogging stanchion  
 Flow of real tears, and endows  
 Heart with a strength for new vows."

An inquest was held next day at the "Three Ringers." Old Jabez Holt's body, grimmer and more unlovely in death than in life, was stretched on the table, and near it the cambric handkerchief and a breech-loading rifle, of most expensive and finished make.

The evidence was not very conclusive at first or interesting. Benji Craig was sworn, and stated that returning from Bletchley with Haman, a fellow-servant, the night before, being a little late they took a short cut, which would lead them through the Spinney, when at some distance from it they heard the report of a gun, and thinking the poachers were abroad took little notice of it, but going through the Spinney they found their master lying there shot through the head. Haman's evidence was similar.

Then the entrance of Mrs. Holt caused a diversion. Everyone stared pitiously at the widow of the murdered man. She looked ghastly—her lips even were white, and her face was all haggard and drawn, as though from severe mental agony.

Her evidence did not amount to much, and she gave it reluctantly. She had not seen her husband since seven o'clock the night before—was sitting in the parlour with the housekeeper when she heard the report of a gun. Thought it was poachers. Did not know of her husband having an enemy, or of anyone likely to take his life. Was on fairly good terms with him. At this stage she trembled so, and seemed so much overcome, that the coroner allowed her to stand down, and the doctor's evidence was taken.

He certified that the wound could not possibly have been self-inflicted, though he was of opinion that the murderer had been within a few feet of his victim when he shot him down.

Then came Rachel Carillon, and there was no hesitation about her. She told what she had to tell in her hard metallic tones. She heard the shot, but did not go out to inquire the cause of it as poachers were common in the neighbourhood. Went when the servants came for her. Saw master lying amid the undergrowth with the handkerchief in his hand. Did she know to whom it belonged? Yes, she knew. Was it one of her master's? No. Whose then? It belonged to Mr. Harley, the master's cousin, and there was "C. H." in the corner. This announcement caused a great sensation among the jurors, and made a man who stood in a dark corner, with hat slouched over his brows, shrink further into the shade. Did she know the gun? Yes, she had seen it often. Mr. Harley had it at the farm when he was staying there, and used to take it out shooting nearly every day. This caused a further sensation. Was Mr. Harley staying at the farm still? No, he left about a week back. Was he on good terms with everyone at the farm? Well, no. He and the master had some words the day he left. About what? About Mrs. Holt. And then she went on with cool deliberation to give her damning evidence to the effect that she had heard him say he wished her mistress was free, and that he would marry her if she were.

She was robbed of half her satisfaction over this statement, for Paola had been taken home in an almost fainting condition, and the man with the slouched hat at this point crept quietly away. She had not much more to tell, and there was little hesitation as to the verdict. After the coroner's summing-up it was returned immediately.

It was a verdict of "Willful Murder against Claud Harley."

Then the crowd melted away from the "Three Ringers," except at the bar, where

groups of two or three stood together discussing the event of the previous night.

Next morning a man and woman stood in the old parlour at the farm. They were both deadly pale, and the woman's eyes were full of an agonised fear.

"I can bear it all if you believe me innocent," he said.

"I do," she answered, meeting his glance bravely. "I know you did not do this foul deed."

"Thanks," he murmured, stretching out his hands and taking hers. "You will always think the same?"

"Always," she replied.

"My own darling!" and then he took her in his arms, pressed a lingering kiss on her brow, and turning went out and gave himself up to the two police officers who had come to arrest him in the name of the Queen, and who conducted him over to Bletchley Prison without delay.

Words cannot paint the anguish Paola felt as she saw the man she loved so tenderly taken off to prison, accused of the horrible crime of shooting her husband.

Knowing that circumstances looked fearfully black against him, and being well aware that he would and could give no explanation of how he had spent that fatal evening for fear of compromising her.

She would have spoken could she have done any good, but she was powerless. Anything she could say was bound to make matters worse, for she had left Claud in the Spinney a short time before Jabez was shot.

A horrible mystery hung over the affair. No one as far as she knew bore Jabez a grudge. There was no motive for the crime, still she never doubted Claud's innocence, and exerted herself to do the best she could to save him; secured a good lawyer, and spared neither time nor expense. In truth, she was glad to have her days fully occupied, for the nights were lonely and drear enough.

She would sit by the ingle-nook, thinking sadly of the happy, bygone days, and listening to the mournful sighing of the winter wind.

One night, as she sat there, about a fortnight after the inquest, one of the maids came to tell her a man wanted to see her on urgent business.

"What is it?" she asked, as she went out into the hall.

"Peter Royle, Mecceus Holt, have sent me to ask if ye will coome and see him," explained the stranger.

"Peter Royle!" she exclaimed in astonishment. "What can he want with me?"

"He's mortal bad; fallen over the cliffs and well-nigh smashed hisel' in pieces. He say he's somethin' to tell ye, somethin' as ye 'ot to know shoot to murder," lowering her voice.

"I will go with you," said Paola at once, a wild hope leaping up in her heart, and telling one of the maids to fetch her wraps; and some for herself, as she would want her to accompany her, she was soon ready, and the three set out together.

It was a wild night, and they had far to go, for it appeared Royle, in a fit of drunkenness, had fallen over the cliffs near the Bullen Rock, and that he lay at a little inn built partly in the rock on the sea-shore.

After a weary tramp they arrived at their destination, and without a moment's rest Paola proceeded to the room where the dying man lay.

He was propped up by pillows, and presented, with his battered face and bandaged, blood-stained head, a ghastly appearance. A doctor sat beside him, and in the farthest corner of the room a man was seated with a little table before him covered with papers, and a pen in his hand.

"Ah! I'm glad ye've coome," said Royle, faintly, as she entered.

"I am sorry to see you in such a state," she said, compassionately.

"Don't be," he rejoined, quickly, "for my death 'll be life to another. Ye'll shrink from me," he went on, after a pause, "when I tell ye the truth, but I must tell it. I'm goin' to

die; there isn't much life in me now, and I'll clear another. "Twas I shot ye're husband."

"You!" she exclaimed, in amazement.

"Yes, I. This hand did it," feebly stirring the bandaged fingers.

"But—but what grudge had you against him?"

"About the bitterest one man can have against another. He seduced and ruined my sister seven-and-twenty years ago."

"Jabez!"

"Ay, ye may well exclaim Jabez! Who'd ha' thought it! Certainly I didn't all these years, an' I never should ha' known it, only Meecees Carillon she had some spite agin him, an' that night I came begging to the farm, an' he refused me even a crust of bread; she piled me with liquor, an' then when I was half mad with drink an' rage agin him, she gave me to letters she'd found in his desk, an' I read them an' see it was Jabez ruined Janet. They were pitiful enough to ha' moved a stone to compassion, but they hadn't moved him; an' as I thought o' her wrongs, and read how she begged him to provide for her, to show pity and charity to it, neither o' which he did, I grew mad and swore I'd kill him."

"Then that jade whispered me that he'd gone down to the Spinnery, an' I rushed down there, an' saw ye meet Master Harley, saw ye part, saw ye go one way, an' he rush wildly to other, an' then I took his gun that he forgot, an' stood waitin' for the man who had ruined my life an' Janet's."

"He came before long, and picked up the handkerchief Master Harley dropped, an' then I stood out an' faced him, tellin' him what I knew, an' he turned an' cursed me, an' I shot him; so he died with a curse on his lips, an' I fled away, knowing I was safe; an' I should na' ha' spoken, for life is dear, only to-night I'd had more'n was good for me, an' mistook to way, and fell over to cliffs."

"But I don't regret wha' I ha' done," he went on, a malignant expression overspreading his pallid face. "He killed her an' her child, the double murderer, and deserved to death by me."

Mrs. Holt felt a tide of conflicting emotions sweep over her as the wretched creature stopped speaking.

She did not attempt to reason with him, for she saw, ere many minutes passed by, that he would be beyond the reach of human praise or human blame, would stand face to face with the

greatest of all judges, and a mighty consciousness of relief was on her.

"You are a police officer, I suppose!" she said, addressing the man at the little table, who had been diligently writing while Royle confessed.

"Yes, madam," he assented with a polite bow.

"Can you tell me, will this confession secure Mr. Harley's release?"

"Undoubtedly it will, madam."

"Before long!"

"In the course of a few days."

"Thank you."

She turned away with a lightened heart, and, without directing one glance at the ghastly occupant of the bed, left the room, and, with the guide and her maid, retraced her steps to the farm, where she found everyone in a state of commotion and horror; for Rachel Carillon, finding the game was up, and knowing that Royle would tell of her share in the crime of Blackman's Spinnery, had taken poison, and her twisted, distorted body lay on the threshold of the old parlour—a gruesome sight, and one which Paola did not forget for many a long day, and which gave her a horror of the room, and of the queer north-country house.

A year or so later the summer sun shone down on a group seated on the lawn of a pretty, picturesque house in lovely Devon.

The group was composed of Mr. and Mrs. Harley, Mr. Munro and his better-half, and two or three of their children.

An air of content and happiness was visible on all the faces, but especially on Paola's.

"And you never quarrel?" Mrs. Munro was saying.

"Oh, never! Claud's will is mine."

"Lucky man!" laughed Solicitor Mark.

"And never disagree!" continued the inquisitive lady.

"And never disagree. We are of one mind in everything, and love each other too much to quarrel."

"Love does not always keep people from quarrelling."

"True love does, I think," said Claud, "and ours is very true and pure, for it has been tried in a fiery furnace."

"And purged of all selfishness!" murmured Paola.

"Your past trials make you better able to appreciate your present happiness," observed the lawyer.

"Perhaps," assented Harley. "At any rate, I am perfectly happy, and perfectly content."

"And so am I!" and a look of supreme content and intense devotion shone on the beautiful face of the woman who had once been Jabez Holt's wife.

[THE END.]

And, moreover, we had heard that women were cowardly, and had "nerves and feelings." So we began to set these aside; played tricks on each other; gained such self-command that we could laugh when we found the sleeves of our gowns sewed up, or thistles in our beds, or shoemaker's wax in the toes of our walking-boots; and, finally, to encourage ourselves in well-doing, offered a prize to that girl in the graduating class who should play the most ingenious practical joke on the others before examination day.

By the way, this prize was a statuette of the Wounded Soldier, to which we had lost our hearts to a girl, and which was to be purchased by general contribution of half-a-crown each.

We had had some annoyance and much fun from this idea before it ended tragically; but I cannot say that there had been much originality manifested, for salt in one's coffee, sugar on one's steak, and cold water on crisp toast, are not new stories, by any means.

Now all college goers know that every college has a ghost. The building Madame Marlowe had established our school in had once been a veritable college in days when pupils were fewer. The principal of this college, Dr. Homan, lived in the building with his daughter, a lovely girl of eighteen.

A professor of languages—a foreigner of dark exterior and rude manners—fell in love with this girl, proposed, and was refused politely.

After this he did not, as he behaved him, go his way in peace; but so persecuted her that she was obliged to ask her father to interfere. He did so, and warned the professor that if he again addressed his daughter he should be required to resign his class.

That evening Miss Homan disappeared. Days after her body, covered with wounds, was found in an old chest in the garret. The professor was suspected, arrested, and convicted of the murder, of which he made full confession on the gallows.

It was Miss Homan's ghost that haunted the upper corridor, and, it was said, appeared to the graduating class every year, until the old college was deserted for the new granite building on the hill, which was our envy.

Now it began to be whispered she had appeared to some of our girls. Ruby Proctor saw her first—to own to it. She declared the ghost a little creature, too small to be any of our girls but Sarah Sidney. But when she had seen it a second time, that suspicion was impossible, for the reason that Sarah sat amongst us at the study-table, as we could all swear.

Some believed it a trick of a competitor for the Wounded Soldier; others, with a belief in the supernatural, were terrified. Others felt it an honour to see the venerable old college ghost. We watched Sarah, but she, professing terror of the spectre, always kept herself in the company of some others, and was never known to be missing when the ghost was seen. It was really a great mystery.

One Sunday evening we had been to church, and had one hour of rest and chat in the reception parlour. People did as they pleased Sunday evening, for there was, of course, no study, and May Pryor had left the room to bring a pretty birthday card she had received from an English cousin, when we heard a shrill shriek in the hall, and something rolling down the staircase, and rushing out, saw May lying at the foot of the stairs, with face deadly pale, and hair all about her shoulders.

We picked her up, but she was quite insensible. We could not bring her to, and the teachers were either gone to their own rooms or still out.

"It must have been the ghost," some one said, looking up the stairs; and then we screamed together, for we saw at the head of the stairs a figure that had frightened each in turn. It came down slowly, sobbing violently. As it came it snatched off a yellow wig, and brushed from its face a coating of powder; and we saw that it was Sarah Sidney; her white ghost costume still hung about her as she knelt down by May's side.

"I did not mean to frighten her so much,"

## SPRAINED ANKLE CURED.

ANOTHER REMARKABLE CASE WHERE ST. JACOBS OIL WORKED A WONDER.

MR. W. H. ALLEN, JRD., of 17, Denmark Street, Aston, Birmingham, writes:—"I am a driver for the Keystone Bottling Company, of Birmingham, and I had the misfortune to be pitched off my wagon, and, besides being bruised from head to foot, my ankle joint was put out and my foot severely sprained."



I tried many embrocations, but received no benefit. I then went to the hospital, but, after having been treated for a considerable time, I left not any better. I then determined to try St. Jacobs Oil, and I can assure you that before I used the contents of one bottle my ankle was as sound as ever, and I was able to go to work as if nothing had happened."

St. Jacobs Oil has conquered pain for over 50 years, and will continue to do so, as long as humanity is afflicted with aches and pains.

## WAS IT A GHOST?

—30—

MADAME MARLOWE said, as we girls had a regular collegiate course, and could graduate with honours like the young men at —, we were perfectly right in calling our establishment Marlowe College.

At all events we did it, and there was a good deal of rivalry between our graduating class and that of the young men.

Great offence had been given by a professor who had said contemptuous things of us, which were reported through the brother of one of the girls, and we resolved to be as much superior to these college boys as possible, at the same time to have nothing to do with them.

We assumed plain cloth costumes and untrimmed hats; and even on holidays were bound to reply to any invitations from these young men, for concerts, or singing-school, or lectures, in a form that read as follows:—

"The approaching examination will entirely prevent Miss — from accepting any social invitations whatever."



she said. "Is she dead! If she is, will they hang me! I deserve it!"

"Yes, you do," cried the girl, who had lifted May to her shoulder—her cousin, Martha Hill. "You wretch, I hate you!"

Then others came, professors, teachers, the doctor, and they carried May away. She was taken home next morning, delirious, they told us.

By that time we had found out how Sarah Sidney had contrived to play ghost without being missed from her place.

She had a twin sister, Susan, as exactly like her as twins sometimes are, and as they always dressed alike, and Susan had but just come to the place it was easy for her to take Sarah's place when nothing very important was going on. The servants would take her for Sarah and let her pass in without question, and but for May's accident I think that Sarah Sidney would have taken our ridiculous prize. Now, however, we were all very miserable over it, and there would be no more fun that year, even if May recovered.

Also one morning we were all horrified by the report that the victim of Sarah Sidney's practical joke was dead. We hardly dared speak of it. As for Sarah, her grief was terrible, and she was firmly convinced that some fearful punishment awaited her.

So the great day came to us, as wretched a set of girls as you could meet on earth. Our preceptress knew nothing of the matter, as we hoped—of the prize we had offered for the best practical joke, or of Sarah's ghost playing; but it was on our consciences. We all felt guilty of murder.

And now, alas! retribution fell upon us. It is hard to convince people of such things in this sceptical age, but we began to see a ghost far worse than the spectre of Miss Homan could have been.

Ruby Proctor was the first, as before, to meet it; and she swore to us by all she held sacred that there could be no doubt whatever that the spirit of May Pryor had met her in the hall. She had even seen the cut on the forehead.

"I shrank against the wall," she said, "and all grew black before me; and when I could see again she was gone—but it was May!"

"Don't tell Sarah," said I. And we kept the secret until, one after the other, we had each seen our lost companion.

We could not doubt. There was no trick in this; no ghost-playing. There was no one in the class who would have played a trick of that sort on another now. We were haunted. It was very horrible, but it bound us closely together. We were like a secret society, with a fearful mystery in our possession, to which no one had the key. And Sarah had learnt somehow, and was in abject terror of seeing May herself. We slept together; always entered the apartment together. It was forbidden to lock doors at night, else we should have done so. But we drew our little beds close together, and I often went to sleep holding Sarah's hand close in mine.

I had done this one night, and still kept it, when I heard a faint rustling sound at the door behind us. It was like that a woman's dress makes. And everyone was in bed in the great house. I dared not even cry out, "Who is that?" But I heard the soft, slow sound more plainly with every pulse-beat. It was approaching our bed. I think that I was braver then than I ever was in my life before, for I would have given millions for the support of the companionship of a human being, and I refrained from waking Sarah.

"It will be worse for her than it can be for me," I thought. "I pray that, if this is May Pryor's ghost, she may sleep through the visitation."

My flesh crept, my hair arose upon my head. I thrilled and shivered, and grew first hot, then cold.

My glimpse of the ghost had been slight, merely her figure passing across a passage at a distance. Now we should be face to face. Could I bear it and keep my reason?

Suddenly I felt both of Sarah's hands clutch mine. She had awakened.

"What is it! What is it!" she gasped.

"Tell me! Tell me! Oh! Helen, tell me what it is!"

I could not answer. We clung together, and a pale violet light fell over the bed, and slowly, softly, a figure all in white, with flowing hair, came towards us and stood at the foot of our couch, and smiled with May Pryor's smile, and lifted, as in blessing, May Pryor's slender white hands, and it was her voice that said,—

"Do not be afraid of me. Do not shrink from me. I come in love."

"Not in love to me, for I killed you!" sobbed Sarah.

"My dear," sighed the spirit, "I know you meant no harm. I forgive you. Be happy. I shall often meet with you. I shall always love you. I came to say so. Good night. Be happy."

"Oh, blessed angel!" gasped Sarah, "you have saved my reason."

"Be happy," sighed the ghost again. "Good night."

Then the light faded slowly, and all about us was music, one soft tune after the other, until at last, with the end of a low lullaby, silence fell. We sobbed ourselves to sleep in each other's arms, and the last words Sarah spoke that night were these:

"May always was an angel on earth. I always said that, Helen."

We went down to breakfast in an excited state of mind, and seated ourselves in our places as those might who had had strange experiences. The girls were seated at one table, the little ones gathering at a separate one, where milk and water took the place of tea and coffee. The seat that May Pryor had filled had never yet been occupied by any one else. It stood as usual, the plate before it. This morning Madame chose to breakfast in her own room, and Miss Robbins presided at the children's table. The head of ours was vacant, for the other teachers were not residents of the establishment.

The housemaid served us as usual; and, after her departure, I looked at Sarah to ask her with my eyes if we should tell our experience to the class. She nodded gravely; and I was about to begin, when the door opened and my mouth shut. A figure entered, dressed not in white, but in blue muslin; but, nevertheless, the figure of May Pryor. The hair had been cut short on her forehead, and she wore a little piece of sticking plaster upon it. She advanced to the table, and took her chair like an ordinary mortal, and merely remarked,—

"Don't stare so, girls, or your eyes will drop out upon your plates. Bless you, my children. I forgive you all, and I really think I have won the prize, especially since my last night's appearance with blue light and slow music. Eh?"

We sat thunderstruck, speechless, happy, angry, bewildered.

"I was hurt, you know," said May, helping herself to toast, and speaking between mouthfuls; "very much hurt. I came near going to Heaven; and when I got better I asked leave to come out of hours and get a little coaching for exam.; and I took Madame into my confidence. So I had a chance to haunt you. Last night I came for good, and I brought my blue night lamp—moonlight effect—and my musical-box—collection of soothing music—with me; and I fancy I have proved my talent for the stage. Pass me the potatoes, Sarah, I'm desperately hungry since my convalescence; and tell me truly, dear, did you always think me an angel?"

"I never shall again," said Sarah Sidney. "You almost killed me!"

However, it was Examination Day, and we were guiltless of blood, and pledged our honour not to wince at any joke whatever.

The Wounded Soldier was sent to May Pryor's home that evening. She had won the prize fairly. By the way, she won most of the other prizes too. We acquitted ourselves very poorly, we others. Our agitation had been great, our sorrow deep, while she had been cool and happy, and had had private coaching, and enjoyed herself greatly. However, we decided to consider it quite fair.

[THE END.]

## THE GARDENER'S DAUGHTER.

—101—

### CHAPTER XXVL.—(continued.)

"MAY, I have a great deal to say to you," he said, as they watched the last rider turn a corner, and they found themselves entirely alone. "We cannot go on in this way, you know. We are a fraud on society."

"Yes, I've been thinking that, too," she returned, very eagerly. "Especially—"

"Especially since Jack Durand asked you to marry him!" added her companion, briefly.

"Yes, but I had thought of it before, and I have a plan to suggest—a capital plan."

"A plan! Let us have it by all means!"

"Such a marriage as yours and mine, made without love or inclination on our parts, but simply to satisfy our elders—"

"Yes, yes," impatiently, "but the plan!"

"Is surely no marriage in the sight of Heaven, it could not be. Nothing binds us tighter together in the faintest way but that miserable bit of paper, the register."

"Oh! And what would you do with that miserable bit of paper, as you call it?" turning, and looking at her fixedly.

"I would destroy it," she answered, simply.

"So that is your plan!"

"Yes! Supposing, to make it more formal, you and I were to go together to St. James's, ask to see the registrar, and you engage him in conversation whilst I cut it out with a pair of scissors and put it in my pocket. I will give it to you, and we will put it in the nearest fire!"

"And we would both get seven years' penal servitude at the least. Your plan is, though you may not know it, common felony."

"I don't know much about technical law, but I do know a little of common sense. We release one another, and we do each other a great benefit, and we do no harm to another soul—we should be free! Think of that, and think that no one knows of our marriage, and that nothing but a paltry entry in a book stands between us and happiness!"

"I'm not so sure that it stands between me and happiness," he answered, coolly. "Are you so very anxious to break the yoke?"

"Yes."

"Well," rather piqued, "you must allow that it has not galled you much!"

"It is not so much for my own sake as yours—that I want to be released."

"For mine! Thank you. I prefer having the matter as it stands in St. James's."

"But you would like to have some choice? You would marry someone else?"

"My choice would still be you, if you would have me; but I'm afraid you would not. However, we are as tightly bound together as anyone else, and you will have to put up with me! Besides, several people now know our secret—Mr. Montagu and Captain Durand—you told them, not I. And now, Mary, I once said I would never ask you again; but—no, I won't ask you again; you must ask me. One thing only I insist on doing—I shall proclaim our marriage to all our friends. You can still live your own life if you like, but it must be under the name of Mrs. Elliot. I am sure you can see that for yourself."

"Is there no other way?"

"None."

"It will seem so very odd."

"It will; but you can rectify that by leaving Folkestone and taking up your residence under my roof."

"May I have two days to think of it?" she asked, after a long silence, as they rode up the avenue of Rose Court.

"Yes; ten, if you like."

"Do not think that I don't like you, Max. How can I help it? You have kept your word honourably. You have been most generous to me. You have just risked your own life to save me from a horrible death. I care for you very much; but there are things to be considered beside myself."

"I am to be considered too, am I not?" lifting her off her horse.

"Yes, you shall be considered too."

"And, Mary, you have both our happiness in your hands now. You will never be so mad—so wicked—as to throw it away, will you?"

"No, I think not."

"And you will give me your settled determination to-morrow?"

"Yes; but you said I might take ten days!"

"And a kiss now!"

"Yes."

Mary carefully avoided her husband for the remainder of the day. She did not appear at dinner, and he was thrown entirely into the arms of Mrs. Clare, who made every use of her opportunities, and engaged him in a game of chess, whilst livelier spirits played "nap" and "poker."

As they were poring over the board, Tommy came up to say good-night; and after watching them steadily for some minutes, said,—

"You don't know what I saw to-day!"

"No," moving a bishop; "and I am sure we don't care," returned Mrs. Clare.

"Oh, but I think you would care; and I'll tell for a shilling!"

"Rubbish! I have something else to do with my money!"

"It's not rubbish! It's a great lack! It's something I saw. I'll tell you, and no one else!" jumping up and down as he spoke.

"Here!" said his cousin, producing a coin, "I'll give you this to take yourself off!"

"Half-a-crown! Oh, my crickey! Well, but first I'll tell, now I'm paid for it!" he said, winking diabolically at Mrs. Clare. "It's about him!—I was looking out of the window when he and Miss Darvall came home; there was no one saw them but me!"

"Shut up, you young fool!" said his relative, hastily.

"No I won't! I saw you lift Miss Darvall off her horse, and you kissed her, and she did not mind a bit! And you called her Mary, too—now!"

In another second the youth was beyond the reach of reprisals—he was gone!

"He ought to be well whipped for telling such untruths!" said Mrs. Clare. "What a wicked child!"

"He did not tell any untruth this time," said Max; "though his bringing up leaves much to be desired."

"Then—then—" becoming livid under her rouge, "you did do what he said—you kissed her!"

"Yes!"

"I wonder you are not ashamed to sit there and confess it!" returned the lady, trembling with rage.

"I have no reason to be the least ashamed."

"What! an unmarried girl!"

"Mrs. Clare, let us understand one another!" he said, gravely. "I told you that Miss Darvall and I possessed a secret in common. That secret will soon be one no longer. In a week or two it will be known to the whole world! Meanwhile, I am going to impart it to you now! You shall be the first to hear it. It is something that will surprise you a good deal. Four years ago Miss Darvall and I were married!"

"Married!" echoed Mrs. Clare, in a hoarse whisper. "Impossible! I don't believe it!"—upsetting half-a-dozen chessmen.

"You can verify the matter by an examination of the church register at St. James's, Caversham. She was Mary Meadows then. It was not a marriage of affection. We parted then and there, and have never lived together since. No, have scarcely seen each other since till you—"

"Then whose?" began Mrs. Clare—but she suddenly stopped. She thought she saw her way to a very neat and complete revenge upon this too handsome and too agreeable young man. So she mastered herself, and said, with wonderful composure,—

"And so this was your secret! Something like a secret, I am astonished! Do tell me all about it."

And, nothing loth, he commenced, and told the whole story, from first to last, winding up with—

"I behaved very badly at the first go off, Mrs. Clare; and she has punished me as you see. But I think it is going to be all right now. She is going to let me call her Mrs. Elliot, and claim her as my wife!"

Here his listener saw her castles in the air come down with a crash. In his short conversation she saw that she lost not only a lover, but a most luxurious home. The Elliots would not want her. She could see by the eager, ferocious way he spoke that Maxwell Elliot was very much in love with his wife. His wife, and not live with her! She did not see or understand that the attention he had paid to her (far less than she had paid to him) was because though not the rose, she was near the rose, and his pride forbade him to make any more advances to Mary Darvall. She must the first step—and she would!

Little did he guess at the storm of fierce heart-pasions that he had raised in his hearer's breast. Outwardly, though her smiles were rare, her interest was friendly and sympathetic. All the while she was thinking where and how she could best plant a poisoned dagger in his heart!

"You have been so good as to tell me your secret, Captain Elliot, and I, in turn, will tell you mine—to-morrow. No, not now! One word of advice," she added, emphatically, "a friend's advice! Do nothing rash until after you know what I have to tell you. Do not claim Miss Darvall as your wife—as Mrs. Elliot, before all the world, till you see her as she is—in her true colours! If you do, you will regret it all your life!"

With this enigmatic remark Mrs. Clare rose slowly, pushed back her chair, and bestowing a warning glance upon her late companion, sailed majestically out of the room.

"What on earth does the woman mean! She talks and looks like a tragedy queen!" muttered Max, as he collected the chessmen.

What does she mean! She means mischief, my innocent young man, and you will know her meaning quite soon enough! Meanwhile, go and cut in among that merry party at the round game, and forget Mrs. Clare.

The next day was to bring two important pieces of intelligence to Max Elliot—Mary's decision and Mrs. Clare's secret. The morning passed without any news from either of them, and in the afternoon everyone was going over to a grand polo match near Folkestone. Some went by rail, some drove. Max, who was a capital whip, drove a neat turn-out and pair of chestnuts, and thought how nice it would be to have had Mary for his companion for the twelve miles; but instead of her he had his cousin, Sophy Seymour, who lectured him over and over again on his celibacy, his indifference to his own interests, and her hopes that after his gallant rescue of Mary Darvall he would "follow it up" by paying her some attention.

"She is worthy of it, I can tell you," she added, impressively. "And that odious little Tommy was right. I did ask you here, Max, on purpose to try and make up a match between you. It seems almost intended by Providence; your two places join, you are both young and good-looking. Where could either of you do better!"

It was on the tip of her cousin's tongue to tell her secret, but he refrained, saying to himself, "better tell it all together this evening, please goodness, or to-morrow at the furthest." And he said very composedly,—

"I'm awfully obliged to you, Sophy, for your good intentions, and I think I shall have a piece of news for you within the next twenty-four hours that will please you very much."

Mrs. Seymour guessed what that piece of news was when she saw her cousin and Mary Darvall walking up and down the grass in earnest conversation, and subsequently sitting on a bench, with their backs to the polo engaged in the same deep discussion behind Mary's huge white parasol.

"It is all right, Mrs. Clare," said Max, rising and approaching her as she walked past in magnificent array. "Come over with me," indicating his companion, who was now all smiles and blushes. Come along, and let

me be the first person to introduce you to Mrs. Elliot."

"Before accepting your kind offer I must tell you my little secret!" rejoined the matron. "Make some excuse. Get someone to take Mary into the luncheon tent, and come away with me for half-an-hour."

"Half-an-hour?" he echoed in dismay.

"Yes, fully that or more."

"But—?" he began to protest.

"But it is your duty to come with me, and my duty to tell you everything before you publicly accord your name to one who does not deserve it."

"Of course you will prove your words, Mrs. Clare?"

"That's just what I am going to do! Please go, then, and arrange with her for a short absence, whilst I get a good fly!"

In a few minutes Mrs. Clare and Captain Elliot were quietly driving away together towards Mrs. Gibson's cottage.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

THE distance from the polo ground to Mrs. Gibson's was little more than a mile, and the fly man, to whom Mrs. Clare promised double fare, very speedily drew up at their destination.

A girl of fourteen was standing in the doorway, with a plump baby in her arms, when they got out and turned to walk up the little footpath side by side.

"Do you see that child in the girl's arms!" said Mrs. Clare suddenly, lifting her veil, and turning a hard, long look on her companion.

"Of course I see it. I am not stone blind!"

"You have no idea whose it is!"

"Not the smallest. Neither know nor care."

"What would you say if I were to tell you that it was Mary Darvall's!"

"I would say that I did not believe it."

"Very well! Come in with me."

"Excuse me. I would rather not! This peering and prying behind people's backs is not to my taste."

"No? Then you are literally afraid to be thus brought face to face with the truth!" retorted Mrs. Clare with a taunt in her voice.

"Oh! if you put it that way, I'm afraid of nothing. Where is the woman of the house? What have you got to say to her?"

"Oh, Mrs. Gibson, may we come in for a few minutes?" said Mrs. Clare, with her very sweetest manner; "and could we have a little talk with you alone—quite by ourselves!"

"Certainly, ma'am," looking rather dubiously at Mrs. Clare's companion. "Will you please to walk into the parlour, and take seats!" hurrying before them, and driving her daughter and her daughter's charge out of the way, and then ushering her visitors into a very low, clean room, containing a square table, covered with price books, a chest of drawers, a horsehair sofa, several wooden chairs, and some gaudy prints.

"Now," closing the door after her, and looking at Mrs. Clare, "I am at your service ma'am!"

"Well, Mrs. Gibson, I've come to ask you to tell this gentleman all you know about Miss Darvall!"

"Indeed, then, ma'am, you will please to excuse me. Mrs. Darvall's affairs ain't none of my business," said Mrs. Gibson, very stiffly.

"But I think they are your business—for one of her most important affairs is in your hands—the baby."

"Don't say such things before me, Mrs. Clare," said Max, rising and looking very angry. "I won't stand it!"

"Oh, of course, if you like to keep your eyes shut keep them shut, but you will regret your folly yet. This is the good woman that takes care of Mary's child!"

"If you please, ma'am, I'd rather not be brought into it at all. I'm sorry I ever set eyes on the infant, and more sorry than I can say that I let you come here and get it all out of me for a sovereign. And here you are bringing the



whole world to hear the story! We have all our faults. I'm not defending the young lady; but a lady she is, as generous and kind-hearted and feeling as ever drew breath. I'll say nought more. I'm sorry I ever said so much."

"Yes, you will to me if you please, Mrs. Gibson," said Max, very sternly. "Do you believe that that is her child that you are taking care of?"

"Why should I tell you, sir?"

"For the excellent reason that I am her husband."

"Oh! And she's privately married! I see it all. Well, then, sir, I can answer you with all my heart. It is here, to be sure!"

"And what grounds have you for saying so?"

"Just these, that about six months ago she drove up here one morning in a terrible taking, with a baby in her lap—alone—and asked me to keep it, and say nothing about it; and offered to pay whatever I pleased. Very liberal she was indeed, and I never saw a young lady more upset!—one moment red as that rose—another as white as paper. She said he was the child of a friend of hers from near Caversham, that she was privately married, and wanted it kept secretly at nurse for a year."

"And have you ever heard of the mother?"

"No sir—never!"

"Nor her name?"

"No sir!"

"Who looks after the child?"

"Miss Darvall comes on the sly now and then."

"And who pays for its keep?"

"Miss Darvall—regularly as clockwork!"

"Can you prove this?" he commanded, fiercely.

"Yes; I can show you one of the cheques. It came two days ago, and I've not had time (this being washing week) to go into Folkestone and cash it! See! this is it!" unlocking a work-box as she spoke, "and here's the letter that came with it!"

"Mrs. Gibson,—I enclose cheque for five pounds for Johnny's expenses. I hope he is quite well. I shall send him a hat and summer coat whenever I return home!

"MARY V. DARVALL."

Captain Elliot folded up this terrible piece of evidence, with a hand that shook visibly.

"I suppose you are satisfied now?" said Mrs. Clare. "Till," with ill-concealed exultation, "was my secret!"

"How did you discover it?"

"I suspected her, and I came here. Mrs. Gibson will tell you the rest!"

"Yes; she came here, sir, and told me it was her duty to hear all, and cried and went on; and said she only wanted to shield her, and be her friend. I misdoubt, if she had been her friend, she would not have brought you here, for I misdoubt if the news is what you expected, or, as I thought at first, would be welcome! From your face it's ill-tidings! Ah, it's my unlucky tongue that has just gone, and just ruined one that was good to me!"

"I should have known it some day! Murder will out!" cried the young man, hoarsely, now standing up, and packing the small room as if he scarcely knew where he was, or what he was doing.

Then suddenly snatching up his hat he said,—

"I shall walk back, Mrs. Clare. You take the car."

"And go back alone!" she repeated, in a tone of irritated amazement. "I had so much to say to you to talk over. Of course!" lowering her voice, "you will sue for a divorce!"

"I have nothing to discuss with you, Mrs. Clare! You have done your duty, and torn the mask from your ward's face, and showed me the hideous naked naked truth—that is sufficient! I must be myself! I must have time to realise it, and to grasp it before I can settle anything!" and, without another word, he opened the door of the little parlour, and went out headlong like a drunken man.

Mrs. Seymour was amused at her cousin Max. He strode up to her, his boots white with dust,

his face livid; and, in a few short disconnected sentences told her that if he was to drive her home she must start now!

"What! and with the polo only half over, and a dance coming off afterwards! Max, you are mad!"

"Nearly so!"

"What has happened?"

"Come with me, now, and you shall hear! I'm going home by train if you can come, and I leave for London to-night. Stafford can drive the chestnuts, though, so don't come if you don't like!"

"Not come!" her curiosity roused to frenzy. "Of course I'll come. I see something very odd has happened to you. What can it be! Have you lost money, Max?"

"No, worse! Come, if you are coming; we will slip away quietly, and on the way home you shall hear something that will astonish you very much."

"I'm not easily astonished!" said the lady, taking up her parcel and gliding out of the tent. "I have come to believe nothing that I hear, and only the half of what I see!"

"But seeing is believing, is it not?" said her cousin, as he handed her into the T-car, and took up the reins and set off.

"Oh, yes; seeing is generally tolerably safe."

"Then I shall tell you what I have just seen," he added, as they rattled down the road at a spanking trot.

And he whispered in her ear (not wishing to take the groom, who sat behind with folded arms, impenetrable countenance, and quick hearing, into his counsels). A little shriek burst from Mrs. Seymour's lips, at the conclusion of this confidence.

And again he whispered something equally astonishing, for she turned round with parted lips, and her eyes looking full into his and said,—

"Max, I cannot believe you! You have taken leave of your senses, or you have taken too much champagne! One thing is as outrageous as the other. It is a hoax!"

But before they had gone two miles she was very fully convinced that it was no hoax, and she was very white and unusually agitated as she alighted at her own hall door.

The abrupt departure of Mrs. Seymour and her cousin was not noted at first, and when people began to ask for them and look for them they could learn nothing beyond the fact that they had been seen driving along at a great pace, about half-an-hour previously.

No one could form any idea of their reason for going away thus abruptly—no one, save Mrs. Clare, who had returned in her fly, and joined the party so unostentatiously that no one ever guessed that she had been absent.

Her eyes followed Miss Darvall, who was walking up and down the sward with a lubberly man, the observed of all observers—thanks to her pretty face, her pretty figure, her pretty dress and her fortune. All the time—although she kept up a vivacious conversation with her companion—she kept saying to herself,—

"What can have become of Max? What is detaining him?"

Mrs. Clare's eyes sparkled as she thought of the awful mine that was about to explode under a certain young lady's feet!

All things, bad and good, come to an end. The polo, a cold collation, and a *The Danes*, wound up by seven o'clock; and nine beheld all the party seated round the dinner-table at Rose Court—all but Elliot. Where was he?

His absence was not accounted for by Mrs. Seymour in any way, and she was silent, absent, and quite unlike herself. There was thunder in the air, some scandal was on the tapis—some scene, everyone felt it—and everyone was unusually subdued with the exception of Tommy, who raised his squeaking voice rather suddenly and said,—

"Max Elliot is going away! His man is packing his things!"

"Is this really true?" said Miss Hall, looking at her horsey.

"Yes, quite true, I am sorry to say."

"Rather a sudden start!" said Captain

Durand, looking fixedly at Mary, who looked back at him with pale amazement. "Has he had bad news?"

"Yes, very bad news," replied Mrs. Seymour, in a tone that implied that she did not intend to give any further details.

Dinner was dull; even the discussion of a very pleasant day fell flat, jokes missed fire, and smiles were scarce.

When the ladies withdrew, Mary waylaid her hostess and took her arm, as they walked to the drawing-room, and said,—

"Tell me why he is going!" she asked, eagerly. "What has happened? What is it all about?"

"Come in here," opening the door of the library. "Come in here," added Mrs. Seymour, in a curiously cool tone, "and I'll tell you. You want to hear what it is all about?" closing the door behind her, and confronting Mary with an angry, scornful face. "Wretched girl! Don't you know? Can't you guess? It's all about you!"

"About me! What about me?"

"He has found you out!"

"You are talking ridiculously! Please speak plainly, and say what you mean at once, and don't torture me!"

"He," drawing her breath, and speaking with slow emphasis, "has been to Mrs. Gibson's cottage, and seen your *protégé*!"

"Yes!" colouring. "Who took him there?"

"Mrs. Clare."

"Mrs. Clare! How did she know?"

"Mary—Miss Darvall—I am absolutely staggered at your unblushing effrontery. Are you not ashamed of yourself? Are you so hardened that you can coolly discuss who found you out?"

"Mrs. Seymour," approaching, and steadying herself by leaning against the table, "it is not possible that you believe that," colouring scarlet, "that child is anything to me beyond—"

"Beyond being your own!" interrupted the other fiercely. "Oh no! Not possible!—not possible that it is a friend—your dearest friend—your dear self! Not possible that you, and no one else, visits it by stealth, and pays for its maintenance!"

"That is enough!" cried Mary, darting off to a writing-table, and taking up a pen and dashing off a few lines in feverish haste.

The note, all shaky and blotched, ran as follows,—

"DEAR JULIA.—My husband has found out your baby! You must clear me at once. Answer by return or telegram.—MARY."

To thrust this into an envelope, scrawl the address, stamp it, was the work of a minute.

"Can this go now?" she said, holding it out to Mrs. Seymour. "Send a man on horseback; it will catch the night-mail, and I shall have an answer by this time to-morrow."

"Yes, it can go now," ringing the bell.

"I'm sorry you mistrust me, Mrs. Seymour—you who have been such a kind, true friend to me! I have not abused your confidence!"

"Yes you have, Mary Elliot! Why did you not tell me that you were my cousin's wife?"

"If you knew all you would not be surprised that I should hesitate to take your cousin's name. You should have been at our wedding, and then you would understand everything."

"I understand that you were a couple of young fools!"

"Very likely we were!"

"After this disgrace it is just as well you never did take his name; and, of course, he will never suffer you to have it now! You can scarcely expect that!"

"Will he not? Where is he?"

"In my sitting-room. He starts by the mail in a few minutes. Poor fellow! he is fearfully cut up! You have ruined his life, for he was fond of you, your miserable wicked girl. You deserve hanging!"

"Miserable enough, but not wicked. I must see him at once."

"That you cannot, and shall not do. He will never set eyes on you again. He said so. His solicitors will write. They will make all arrangements."



"MAX, IF YOU KILL ME YOU WILL BE SORRY. I AM INNOCENT!" SAID MARY, TEARFULLY.

"Do not stand between me and the door. I will pass," said Mary, resolutely.

In another moment she was flying up the soft carpeted stairs, along a passage, and into a room—a sitting room—lit by one lamp, where a man sat at the table resting his head on his arm in an attitude that spoke for itself.

The first thing she did was to shut and lock the door, the next to hold up the key and say,—  
"You don't leave this room till you say that you believe me!"

He raised his head and looked at her, his face flushed with intense anger—nay, fury.

"Believe you! Yes, to be the worst, the most deceitful of your sex, a whited sepulchre."

Every word came slowly, the concentrated repression of each indicating a suppression of rage which almost placed her life in danger.

"Do you know," he said, in a hot, thick voice, "that I have a good mind to murder you and then kill myself? Why not! You have murdered every good feeling in my heart—belief in the pure and beautiful, belief in everything but wickedness. Do you know that you have, as it were, given your life into my hands when you came in here and looked that door behind you!"

She drew herself up and looked him steadily in the face, and tried with all her might not to betray the absolute physical fear which was making every limb quiver.

"Do you see this!" reaching for and taking up a long foreign dagger that lay upon a writing table. "Do you see this!" he repeated, removing its sheath and holding the glittering weapon in the light. "Yes," examining it closely, "it is sharp, it will make no bungling. The good old laws were best! No mercy was shown to a woman who betrayed her husband, her punishment was death."

"She was strangled, but——" coming a little closer.

In a moment the words seem to choke her. Then she lifted her hands half in supplication, half as if warding him off.

"Max, if you kill me you will be sorry,"

sudden tears filling her eyes. "I am innocent. Before Heaven I am innocent; and oh! the shame of it!" the blushes covering her face to the roots of her hair. "Of what you think——"

He looked at her scornfully for nearly sixty seconds, and then coming up close to her laid his hand upon her arm, holding it fast with a strong vice-like grasp that made her courage ebb away, and left her only a shrinking, terrified trembling girl.

"Woman," he said, fiercely, "would you die with a lie upon your lips! Would you ask me to disbelieve my own senses?"

"I would ask you to believe me, Max!" she answered, bursting into a storm of tears.

These tears were her safety. They swept the momentary madness from her accuser's brain. He relinquished her arm and recoiled a step, and said,—

"I am a brute! No matter how abandoned you may be, yet you are a woman!"

"I—I—am," with a stifled sob, "I am your wife, Max. And—and I demand a hearing!"

A sudden desperate strength came to her, and she stood and looked at him with gleaming and defiant eyes. "I have done you no wrong," she said, slowly and distinctly. "No—no wrong!"

"Oh, no! none at all!" he interrupted, with a savage laugh.

"I have been foolish," she continued. "I have made great trouble for myself by shielding another. She came to me last Christmas, told me she had been privately married, and wanted to conceal her baby. She wanted to leave it with me, but I vowed I would not have it. Next morning I called for it at the 'Fortescue Arms,' to make arrangements with Mrs. Gibson. But she had gone, and left the baby for me! I could not allow it to starve now could I?"

"And this is six months ago? Who is she?"

"I am bound to secrecy. She will release me. I've written now. You shall hear immediately."

"When does she mean to claim it?"

"She never says. She seems reluctant to leave a most luxurious home for a hard, rough life of

poverty in the colonies. That is her alternative."

"A very clever tale I must say!"

"You believe me, do you not! Oh, say you believe me! Trust me, even till to-morrow, Max!"

"Believe you! I am a sane man!"

She looked at him for a full minute with a gaze that surprised him. A faint quiver of her white lips degenerated to a scornful curve.

"You are neither just nor generous!" she said. "You surprise another's secret for mine, try me and condemn me, and refuse to listen to my defence—refuse to allow me to call witnesses in behalf of my innocence! Wait till to-morrow for some honest testimony in my favour."

"I must wait now!" glancing at the clock on the mantelpiece. "Yes, I will be just. I shall not condemn you unheard. But, oh!" sitting down, and once more burying his head in his arms, "Mary, the evidence is too strong. I dare not build on your innocence. You don't know; you could not realise, or believe, how I loved you! I thought you the purest, if the proudest, of your sex. And to think—surely with me the bitterness of death is past!"

"And surely with me the bitterness of death is past!" she echoed, snatching up the dagger, and walking over and throwing it out of the open window.

The blinds were not down, and some curiosity had been evinced by spectators, who were strolling up and down the terrace, as to what those two figures were doing.

They could not see; but, now and then, a tone—the tone of a man's voice—speaking with intense passion, or emotion of some kind, fell upon a passing ear. Then—oh, mystery! Miss Darvall, in her white gown, came suddenly and swiftly to the window and flung some glittering, shining metal object forth—something that fell on the marble terrace with a loud clang.

Lucy Barry ran and picked it up promptly; and, to her amazement, it proved to be a dagger!

To be continued.)





"MY DARLING!" SAID DENIEL, AND CAUGHT HER IN HIS ARMS; "HOW COULD YOU LET ME SUFFER SO!"

## ORDEAL BY FIRE.

### CHAPTER XXIII.

THE Vicar of Barton and his wife were not rich, but they possessed a charity out of all proportion to their means. Dr. Grey thought them almost foolhardy for taking an unknown stranger into their house and making themselves responsible for all the expenses of her illness. He ventured on a word of remonstrance to Mr. Stone while Margaret was upstairs with the sick girl.

"The young woman has no claim on you, Mr. Stone; her illness is likely to be a long affair; it may end in death. It's really a risky thing to take her in."

"My wife wished it," said the vicar, simply; "and, besides, the poor young creature seems so friendless, we could not leave her uncared for. It will be hard enough for her when she comes to her senses to hear of the baby's death. She must not find herself in the workhouse infirmary to add to her despair."

Dr. Grey shrugged his shoulders.

"You are not fair to yourselves—to your own children!"

Mr. Stone smiled.

"They won't be any the worse off because their parents remembered the saying, 'Blessed are the merciful.' Now, doctor, will you go and see your patient!" here he smiled, "and send in the bill to me!"

"You know perfectly it was not that I was thinking of," growled Dr. Grey. And then he went upstairs to the room where Margaret had undressed the poor, unconscious stranger and laid her in bed.

"She was in deep mourning," said Mrs. Stone, in a whisper, as he tried to restore Idonie. "I wonder if it was for her husband?"

"No; the child had a blue frock. If it had been as you think she would have put him into

mourning. It's wonderful what importance the poor attach to 'a bit of black!'"

Margaret hesitated.

"I don't think she belongs to the class we generally call 'the poor,' doctor. Look at her hands, they are as white and free from marks of toil as a lady's, and her wedding-ring is of the richest thickest gold."

Dr. Grey glanced at the hand and the ring; and then he looked perplexed.

"I went by the child. I know a good deal about babies, and I am quite sure that one belonged to the working-class; his blue frock and plaid pelisse proved it."

Presently the remedies took effect Idonie opened her eyes and looked feebly round the room; but her mind must still have been wandering, judging by her words.

"Oh, have pity!" she pleaded. "I did you no wrong. Why cannot you let me be in peace!"

Mrs. Stone and the doctor glanced at each other; then Margaret laid her cool hand on the girl's fevered brow.

"You are quite safe with us. There has been an accident, and you were hurt; but you will soon be better."

Idonie turned her beautiful eyes on the speaker, full of a piteous entreaty.

"I don't want to be better," she said, almost fractionally; "life is so hard without my husband. Please let me die! If only I can join my little ones I shall feel no more sorrow."

Margaret's eyes were wet with tears.

"Is there no one you would like us to send for?" she asked, gently. "No one who will be anxious about you?"

Idonie shook her head.

"I was running away, you know. I only wanted to hide myself." And then the brief flash of memory passed, and she sank back unconscious on her pillows.

Of course there was an inquest, which was duly recorded in the newspapers; the wonder was the Rector of Trefuski did not read the

account. But the railway-station served for Weston and several adjacent villages; so, even if he had seen the paragraph, there was nothing to make him connect the unknown victim with his raising governess.

The inquest, however, cleared up one point which had somewhat baffled Dr. Grey and the Stones. People came forward to identify Mrs. Bates and her baby, thus proving that the girl, in whose arms the dead child had been found, was not his mother. Strangely enough, poor Bates died in the hospital the night of the accident, so the little family were soon reunited in death. Two other passengers were killed, and several slightly injured. But the only one in any danger was the beautiful girl who lay in Mrs. Stone's spare room, hovering between life and death.

"It's not the accident alone that's brought her to this," Dr. Grey told the Vicar, "there's been something on her mind for weeks; and, probably, she'd have been ill if she had never been in the train. The broken arm which the collision gave her, is easier to cure than the other evil."

Of course, people round Barton were curious about the sufferer, but the Vicar alluded all questions by a very brief explanation. The lady was a young widow going to London; from a book in the small hand-bag which contained her few possessions, her name was evidently Lindsey.

The book, one of those tiny old-fashioned ones with a text for every day in the month, had been given to Idonie years before by her mother. By a strange freak of fate she had caught it up while she dressed for the last time on board the *Atalanta* and put it in her pocket; it had never left her since, she clung to it as the last link with the past, but at T. 's Rectory she had kept it carefully in her lock and key, knowing that the name on the fly-leaf would be a revelation to those around her.

She was ill for weeks, and September was half over when she came downstairs, a very

fragile, hollow-eyed creature, to lie on the sofa, under Mrs. Stone's personal guardianship.

And it was then, for the first time, that she seemed disposed to talk of herself, or to show any interest in her own future.

"I can't thank you," she said, brokenly, to Margaret, "if I had been your own sister you could not have been kinder to me, and yet I am sorry your care saved my life. I am so lonely, so unhappy, I wanted to die."

Margaret brushed away a tear.

"We can't settle the length of our lives ourselves, dear," she said, gently. "I own you have had a great and crushing sorrow, without your husband life must seem desolate, but there is always work waiting for us, and work is the best panacea for trouble."

"You don't understand," Idonie fidgetted nervously with the silk sofa blanket and did not look up to meet Mrs. Stone's eyes. "You don't understand; my husband is not dead."

Margaret felt bewildered.

"Do you mean that he deserted you?" she asked, slowly. The Vicar's wife had seen a great deal of the seamy side of life, but she did not think deserted wives were ever so young and beautiful as her poor little patient.

"Oh, no! he is very good, he would not desert me. He got tired of me, I was so young and childish you see, and when the children died he left off caring for me."

"But, my dear," said her friend, kindly, "if he did not desert you, why were you travelling alone? Why, in all the weeks since the accident has Mr. Lindsay made no effort to find you?"

"He is not Mr. Lindsay, that is my maiden name. It is all a great mistake. I should like to tell you about it, I haven't been able to trust anyone since Nan died. But will you promise to keep my story secret?"

Mrs. Stone hesitated.

"I never like to keep things secret from John," she said at last.

"Oh, the Vicar must not know. He might be writing to my husband."

"I am sure he would not do that without your consent. Well," she went on, reluctantly, "I am sure it is very bad for you to brood over your troubles alone, so I will make you this promise: I will only tell John that your husband is alive, I won't say a word that could make him guess his name or where to find him. Now, will you trust me?"

"Yes. Oh, it will be such a relief to tell you the truth," and in a weak, quivering voice she began her story from the day Alice Grant came to her house an unwelcome guest to the night when she left Trefusis Rectory, a fugitive from James Adair's malice.

If she had expected blame or reproach from Mrs. Stone she was mistaken. The tears rolled down Margaret's cheeks as she listened, but when Idonie paused all she said was—

"You poor, poor child."

"Oh," said the girl, feeling what an unutterable relief it was to pour out her heart, "you cannot guess what I have suffered. I was always longing for Denzil, always; it was as though I never knew how much I had loved him till I had lost him. I used to shut my eyes and picture him married to Alice Grant, and her children in his arms; Mrs. Stone, it almost drove me mad."

"I don't wonder," said the Vicar's wife, gravely, "but, my dear, why did you enter your brother-in-law's family? What in the world induced you to go where your feelings must be tortured and your heart-strings wrung a dozen times a day, while those who hurt you were quite unconscious of their work?"

Idonie smiled wistfully.

"I had seen Mrs. Trefusis before I heard her name, and she seemed to me kind and gentle. Then I had a sort of longing on me for news of Denzil. I thought at Trefusis Rectory I should hear of him often, and see his old home."

"It must have been torture to you!"

"Yes," confessed Idonie, "I never guessed what it would cost me. I had to see the house, whose mistress I was to have been, as a stranger. I had to hear Lady Mary discuss her son's grief for his wife (myself), and hope that he would

come home, and, putting aside his own feelings, marry again for the sake of the old name. Mrs. Trefusis, gentle, kindly woman that she was, herself begged me never to let her boy hear himself spoken of as his uncle's heir. Sir Denzil was quite young enough she said to take a second wife."

"And you stood it for three months!" said Mrs. Stone. "I think it would have killed me in three days!"

"The strangest part was that I liked them," said Idonie, slowly. "I had always had the strongest possible prejudice against my husband's family; but when I knew them I felt I could have loved Lady Mary as a second mother, and that her children would have been real brothers and sisters to me but for my own miserable folly."

Mrs. Stone looked troubled. She was so tender-hearted she could not bear to wound this girl who had already suffered so much, and yet there were things that for Sir Denzil's sake, for the sake of children yet unborn, must be spoken.

"My dear," she began gently, "you have my promise that your story will be safe with me, and you may trust me to keep it; but there is one thing you must do. Whether you return to Sir Denzil Trefusis or pass your whole life hidden from him, there is one thing you owe him. You must tell him you are still alive."

Idonie opened her big eyes wide in surprise.

"But why? As soon as I am stronger I shall begin to earn my own living again. I know that I can never repay all you have done for me; but I shall be able to keep myself. I shall never have to ask my husband for a sixpence, so why should I tear away the veil from the past, and harrow his feelings afresh?"

Mrs. Stone could have shaken her for her innocence. It made it so hard for her to explain. She would not have hurt Idonie willingly for the world; but she saw it was not a case for half-measures; the plain, unvarnished truth was best.

"My dear, you said a little while ago it pained you to think of Sir Denzil with another wife, and, perhaps, with children, who were not yours."

"Yes," said Idonie, simply, "I suppose it is jealousy. I hate to think of it."

"That is why you must tell him the truth," said her friend. "While you live no other woman can be Lady Trefusis. Don't you see, dear, it is cruel, wicked, to leave Sir Denzil under the belief of your death. He might marry again. Think of the fate of the lady who thought herself his wife. Think of their children!"

"But—"

Mrs. Stone interrupted her.

"You may argue you would keep your secret in life and death, and no one else could betray it. My dear, such secrets get betrayed by trifling causes we never even suspect. Think of the hundreds of people who must have seen you when as Lady Trefusis you were the reigning beauty of Doleraud. Think how improbable it is that you may pass your life without meeting one of them again. Yours is not a face to be easily forgotten. Sir Denzil Trefusis will be home in October. Before that time I entreat you to weigh the subject well. Either be reconciled to your husband, or at least let him know that you still live."

"How do you know that Denzil will be home in October?" demanded Idonie, feverishly. "When I left the Rectory it was thought he would postpone his return indefinitely."

"My only sister is the wife of the Vicar of Weston," said Mrs. Stone, "and I have often visited her—indeed, I lived there altogether before my marriage. Weston is quite near enough to Trefusis for Lucy to be up, in the news of the latter place, and in the very last letter she mentioned that Sir Denzil was expected towards the end of October."

Idonie smiled.

"Then you know the people I have been talking of. Perhaps you have met my husband?"

"I have never seen Sir Denzil. I know the Rector of Trefusis and his wife fairly well, and as a young girl I was a great favourite of Lady Mary. Hilda and I are just the same age."

"What a little world it is after all!"

"Yes," said Mrs. Stone, thoughtfully. "You said just now that one of your reasons for hiding yourself from your husband's family was that you feared the malice of Mr. Adair. Was his Christian name James?"

"Yes," looking up with a start. "Of course your sister would know him, he was staying in Weston with his uncle, Sir Reginald Fairfax. People said he was to be his uncle's heir."

"Did you know Sir Reginald?"

"I met him several times. He was kindness itself. It troubled me to think Mr. Adair was to succeed him. You see, it meant that he and my husband would be near neighbours for life."

"That need never trouble you again. Mr. Adair has gone back to India."

"To India! But Sir Reginald meant to adopt him."

"Lucy has only given me the bare facts. Of course, she could not tell what interest the story had for me. It seems Sir Reginald and his nephew had a difference, and Mr. Adair was cut off without even the proverbial shilling."

"You cannot mean that Sir Reginald is dead?"

"He died three weeks after the accident which brought you here. He left some handsome legacies to the Trefusis family, and the bulk of his property to a godson he had not seen for years. Mr. Adair tried to upset the will; at least he took counsel's opinion about it, but he was told he had not a leg to stand on, and that no respectable lawyer would take up his case. Mr. Dynevor, the new master of the Priory, behaved very generously, and offered to settle ten thousand pounds on him if he decided to return to India, and he accepted. He has sailed by now."

Idonie drew a sigh of unutterable relief.

"I feel as if I could breathe better now I know the water divides us. I wonder if Mr. Dynevor is nice?"

"That's a vague word. Lucy says he is charming, but why—"

"If he were very nice, he might be nearly good enough for Hilda."

Mrs. Stone laughed.

"Don't go matchmaking for Hilda Trefusis, dear. She is one of those women happiest unmarried. And in this case you would be too late. Mr. Dynevor possesses a very charming wife of his own."

## CHAPTER XXIV.

WHEN the letter from Mrs. Gresham arrived, and its contents reached Harold Dynevor, he felt there could no longer be any concealment from his wife. Nan must know that Idonie had survived the perils of the ordeal by fire, and had been actually living at Trefusis Rectory within a very few weeks of his going there.

"It has been a regular game of cross-purposes, darling. You and Lady Trefusis have each mourned the other as dead, but now I don't despair of finding her. Think what it would be to meet Sir Denzil with the news his wife still lives."

"But he may not care now. You know he never answered my letter, Harold."

"His brother seems convinced he never had it. You know, Nan, his professional duties took him a great deal from home, and I have had some experience of the carelessness of Indian servants. If a letter is lost it always turns out to be one of the greatest importances."

"Harold, are you sorry to give up work? Do you regret your career?"

"I am afraid not," he said, cheerfully. "I don't believe I was meant for a money-making machine, the Imperial Bank seemed the best opening for me, and I have tried to do my duty in it, but my tastes were always for a country life, but whenever I pictured to myself an ideal home it was always in the country, and after the fashion of my godfather's. I would never have tried to prejudice Sir Reginald against Adair, but I can't help rejoicing in the beautiful old homestead that has come to us."

"I am so glad you offered Mr. Adair a sum of money, it will make things easier for him, and



—is it superstitious, Harold?—I shall be so much happier when he has sailed for India."

"I don't think it is superstitious, Nan; Adair is far better suited to India than to be a struggling barrister at home, he has friends out there, and is (to strangers) a very fascinating young fellow. I shouldn't be in the least surprised if he blossomed out into a judge some day."

"And we have done him no harm," said Mrs. Dynevor-Fairfax, thoughtfully, "for he had no prospects here."

"None at all. He had managed to make himself detected all round Weston, and since it has been decided to tell Sir Denzil Trefusis the whole story of Adair's connection with his wife, I think Jim may be thankful to be out of England before the Baronet's return."

One very great pleasure was Nan's, in the short time they remained in London, before going down to the Priory. Nell Lester came to see her, and proved by the manner of her greeting that the new love had not driven out the old, and even in the happiness of her engagement, she had not forgotten the time when she and Nan shared the little flat at Kensington.

"Oh, my dear, my dear," she said, when she had kissed her friend again and again, "what a romantic story yours has been, and to think that it is not a year yet since you left the Gallery."

Nan smiled.

"Do you know, I went there yesterday!"

"You don't say so. To see Mr. Andrews?"

"To buy a few trifles for my new home. Harold gave me *carte blanche*, and I shall always say there is no shop to compare to the Gallery."

"And did you see Mr. Andrews?"

"Not till I was nearly leaving, then my successor went to consult him about the price of a piece of old brocade, and he came back with her. He stared at me as if he had seen a ghost, and then Harold, who was with me, said, 'You see, Mr. Andrews, my wife does not bear malice. You were not particularly kind to her last year, but she would not go anywhere else for her hangings.'"

"And what did he say?"

"He dropped the brocade on the floor, as though it had been common chintz, and stared at me."

"Bless my soul," he said at last, "then it is Miss Lindsay?"

"No," said Harold, "Mrs. Dynevor-Fairfax, of Woodlake Priory."

"And then?"

"Well, he asked me to shake hands with him, and he told me he was glad he had seen me, for somehow he couldn't get me out of his head, and he had had a kind of feeling if any ill befell me it would be his work."

"And Mr. Tom?"

Nan laughed.

"He is married to an Indian widow, and lives in great style at Chiswick. I fancy Mrs. Tom is much too grand for the old people, for Mr. Andrews said they saw very little of her."

And from that they went to Nell's engagement, and the delightful home she would have at the Rectory, and how Douglas Trefusis was a king among men.

"And your first love—journalism, Nell, what has become of that. Are you going to retire?"

"Yes," said the bride-elect. "You see, I couldn't possibly be rushing about to dances and smart dinners that had to be described in the next day's paper just when Douglas was at home. But I shall not quite lay aside my pen, Nan, I mean to write a book."

It may as well be remarked here that the book was never written. As a bride Mrs. Douglas Trefusis was the fashion, and consequently had very little leisure, and later on certain small people, who arrived with wonderful celerity to inhabit the Rectory nursery, claimed so much of her time that literary work was out of the question.

Nell never regretted it. Perhaps she thought that to make one man happy was quite enough for any woman to achieve.

But to return to that first meeting of the two friends after their long separation. Nan told the story of the red velvet furnished cabin on

board the *Atalanta*, and in a low voice confessed she should never scoff at clairvoyance again.

"I think a good many who practise it are swindlers," said Nell, bluntly, "but Madame Héloïse was genuine. I went to her as soon as I heard of the fate of the *Atalanta*."

"And you asked her about me?"

"That was what I went for. She made me profoundly miserable, and yet I have proved her words were true. She told me I should never see Nan Lindsay again."

"But—"

"My dear, she was quite right. I have seen you, but I have not seen Nan Lindsay, and I never shall."

The next day Mr. and Mrs. Dynevor-Fairfax went down to Woodlake Priory. Nan found herself warmly welcomed by all the Trefusis family. There was a bitter-sweet charm in being with those who had seen Idonie so recently, even though none of them seemed very hopeful about finding the fugitive.

"I do so wish I had discovered her secret while she was here," said Nora Trefusis, sadly. "I can't help thinking we must all have been very cruel to her without meaning it. Why, Hilda and I have discussed Denzil's return, and the chances of his marrying again in Idonie's very hearing."

Nan pressed Nora's hand in sympathy.

"You could not tell. When is Sir Denzil expected?"

"He will be in London next week. My husband is going to meet him."

"And he will tell him all."

"Yes; Archie and I feel the time for concealment is over. You know, Mrs. Fairfax, if Idonie is found there need be no occasion for scandal. The Rector thinks it can be given out, and truly, that she has been in delicate health ever since the wreck, and her friends thought it best to take no steps until Sir Denzil's return."

"But if she comes here she must be recognised as your late governess."

"I think not. She was sad, ill, and well-nigh heart-broken while she was at the Rectory. If ever she should come to resign at Trefusis Hall, she would be happy, prosperous, and content. No doubt people would detect a shadowy resemblance to my governess; but they would never guess the truth. Besides, except my old nurse and such tried friends as Mr. Graham, no one knows Miss Lister ran away. The general impression is she was sent for to a relative who was ill."

## CHAPTER XXV.

SIR DENZIL TREFUSIS returned to England with a heavy heart. He had not forgotten his wife, and it seemed to him he would miss her more, not less, when his professional duties were over, and he settled down to a country life. The very thought of living among his own people, in sight of his brother's married happiness, was painful to him; but he was not a man to shrink his duty because it was unpleasant, and having once made up his mind his right course was to return to England, he never wavered.

It was ten months after his supposed bereavement when Sir Denzil drew near London, and the ladies on board thought he might have got over his grief by that time. The stately Baronet had been a great disappointment to them, for he had avoided feminine society in the most marked manner, and had seemed quite engrossed with his own thoughts.

Denzil knew that his brother Archibald would meet him at the docks; but he had not expected letters from his family. One of the steam company's officials who boarded the vessel at Gravesend, brought quite a large mail bag, and in it was a small, unpretending little envelope, addressed to "Sir Denzil Trefusis, passenger, on board the steamer *Azula*. It was in a lady's writing, and one that he had never seen before.

The Baronet felt very little interest or curiosity about the letter. He was in that state of supreme indifference when it took a good deal to rouse him, but as the steamer pursued her way to the docks, it seemed to him he might as

well see what his unknown correspondent had to say. He tore open the envelope and took out the closely-written sheet, with a feeling of dismay at its length; but when he had once begun to read the letter, indifference and dismay both vanished.

"DEAR SIR—I write this letter only from a sense of duty, fearing that you may deem it officious, but there seems no one else to break the news to you. Lady Trefusis is not dead. She was saved from the wreck, but shrank from communicating with your family; first, because she believed they would have learned to look on her as dead, and also because she had taken up the fancy that you regretted your marriage, and would be glad of your freedom."

"Since the spring she has supported herself as a governess, but a railway accident two months ago brought her very near death. She was taken to my house unconscious, and when she grew better she confided her story to me. Her idea seems to be that since she will never claim her rightful place in your house, you are free to marry again, and that bitterly as she repents her concealment, it is too late now to come forward and own that she is Lady Trefusis."

"But I know that by the English law you can never have another wife while she lives, and it seems to me that one so young and beautiful cannot be already forgotten by her husband. If, indeed, your wife is right, and you would rather think of her as dead, then take no notice of this letter; but if any of your old love for her lingers in your heart, then write to me and I will see if I can induce Lady Trefusis to let me give you her address. She has almost broken her heart in these months of separation; but it seems to me if only you could see her now you would have a better chance of happiness than you have ever had before."

"I am, yours faithfully,

"MARGARET STONE."

When the Rector of Trefusis saw his brother he was amazed at the eager, excited expression on Sir Denzil's face. Almost before the ordinary greetings were exchanged the traveller demanded: "Archie, where's Barton?"

"Barton! There's a Barton Junction between us and London. There was rather a bad accident there in the summer. But why on earth do you want to know?"

"Is the vicar's name Stone?"

"Yes; his wife is some relation of the Rector of Weston. I went over to marry them, as the Rector had to give away the bride; but I can't imagine why you want to know?"

"Read that letter."

When Archie Trefusis had done so he tendered it back to his brother, with the simple comment: "Thank Heaven."

"Do you believe it is true?"

"I am sure of it. I should have written to you, only we calculated my letter might not arrive before you left India. We have found Nan Lindsay, from her story and other things, Nora and I feel certain that the young lady we know as Miss Lester, who taught our children, was in truth your wife. She left us in August, on the very day of the railway accident near Barton. I should say there could be no doubt that after many days the lost is found."

"Andrew will see my things through," said Sir Denzil. "I shall go down to Barton tonight. You'll come with me, Archie, just to prevent my going distracted with suspense."

"I'll come, and gladly. I have a good deal to tell you."

They had a "reserved" carriage, for in Denzil's state of nervous tension the presence of a stranger would have been agony to him. The Rector told all he knew of Idonie from the time of his wife's meeting her at Dover. He told Harold Dynevor's account of the wreck of the *Atalanta* and Mrs. Graham's letter, which clearly proved "Miss Lester" had been one of the rescued passengers. He kept back nothing, and Sir Denzil listened as one who could not hear enough.

"If it is Idonie, and she forgives me, life will be full of joy."

The Rector, calm, kind, and thoughtful, went to the practical part of the matter.

"I am very sure it is Idonie, and that she will forgive you. You had better take her to some mild place in Devonshire (neither of you would care to face a sea voyage, or I should say go abroad) for some weeks, and meanwhile I will get notices inserted in all the leading papers of the miraculous escape of Lady Trefusis; how, after being mourned as dead, she was discovered by her friends; and it is hoped the illness which prostrated her, and made it impossible for her identity to be discovered sooner, is now giving way to treatment, and that before long she may be restored to perfect health."

"Yes, that will do. But, Archie, so that I get back my wife I don't care a fig what anyone thinks."

"But our mother cares a great deal," returned the Rector, "and Heaven may send you other children besides the two you left behind in India. For their sakes no breath of scandal must rest upon your wife's name."

The two gentlemen reached Barton Vicarage about six. Here a check greeted them: the servant declared both Mr. and Mrs. Stone were out.

Archibald looked at his brother, and then took the initiative.

"Our business is very particular. Is there any one who could take a message for Mrs. Stone? Has she a daughter or a sister?"

"The daughters are but children, sir. Miss Lindsay, the governess, is in if you would care to see her."

She tapped at the drawing-room door, and, opening it, answered,—

"These gentlemen want to leave a message for the mistress, ma'am."

But one of the gentlemen did not enter the room. He slipped five shillings into the girl's hand.

"I'd like to have a look at the church if you'll get me the keys."

So Denzil Trefusis went in alone.

Idonie turned and saw him. She grew first pale, then red. Her faltering lips could hardly frame the word—

"Forgive!"

"My darling!"—and Denzil caught her in his arms. "My wife given back to me as it were from the grave. Oh, Idonie, how could you let me suffer so!"

"I thought you would be glad after a little. I was so young and foolish; and there was Alice Grant."

"I would not marry Alice Grant if she were the only woman on this earth. It is you I want, you I love. Oh, my wife, how could you doubt me!"

"If you are going to forgive me you must know everything," she said, bravely. "I can't come back to you, Denzil, knowing there is a secret between us. I must tell you all. Perhaps when you know how foolish I have been, you won't be so glad you have found me."

"I shall bless Mrs. Stone all my days for writing to me."

"She promised she would not ask you to take me back. She seemed to think it so terrible you thought yourself a widower that I had to let her tell you I was alive."

"She asked me nothing—but, darling, 'to take you back' is the one desire of my heart."

And then Idonie told her story, and perhaps as he listened to it the strongest feelings in Denzil's heart were joy at her safety and bitter anger against James Adair.

"I should like to punish him."

"He has gone back to India," said Idonie, "so he will never trouble us again, and Mrs. Stone says his uncle disinherited him, so he has had punishment enough."

"Not half as much as he deserves. Idonie, do you know your sister is alive, and you will have her for a near neighbour? She married Harold Dynevor, and by Sir Reginald's will he takes the Priory."

"Nan alive! Nan settled at Weston! Denzil, are you sure?"

Mrs. Stone came in then and Mr. Trefusis with her. She had found him 'meditating

among the tombs'—in other words, pacing up and down the churchyard—a cold occupation on a wet October night.

"I can never thank you enough," said Sir Denzil to the kindly woman. "I owe my wife to you twice over. Once you saved her life. Then you let me know she was still spared to me."

In late December, when Christmas was near at hand, there was a grand gathering at Trefusis Hall to welcome home Sir Denzil and his wife, who had spent the last two months in Devonshire.

The beautiful old house was radiant with fire and lamp-light. Lights gleamed in every window. A flood of brightness streamed from the front door whenever it was opened, and within, in the great square hall where the yule log burned, was a great assembly of friends and relations. Lady Mary, her children, and grandchildren, Mr. and Mrs. Dynevor-Fairfax, pretty Lady Cardale, the Vicar of Weston and his wife, were all gathered there, and in the park waited a crowd of tenants and villagers eager to cheer the landlord who had been away from them so long.

When the bells of Trefusis Church broke out with a crashing peal, it was the signal that Sir Denzil's carriage had reached the village. On, on, it came, until the sound of ringing cheers told that he had entered his own domain. Then the door was flung open, and the family went out on to the terrace just as the carriage stopped, and Denzil led his wife up the steps to his mother's side.

Very tender was Lady Mary's greeting of the girl she had known first as a poor little governess. Then Idonie was locked in her sister's arms. For the first time since they parted on the burning ship Nan saw her darling again.

All Trefusis village feasted that night at Sir Denzil's expense, and there had not been such a family gathering as sat down to dinner at the Hall since his father's time.

Later, when the visitors had dispersed, and husband and wife were alone, Denzil put one hand lovingly on Idonie's shoulder,—

"Are you content, my darling? Do you think you can be happy here?"

"I could be happy anywhere with you. Oh, Denzil! how could I ever have doubted your love!"

"There shall be no more shadows between us, sweetheart," he answered. "We have gone through a time of bitter sorrow, Idonie, but perhaps our future life will be all the happier for it."

And it was. The wedded felicity of Sir Denzil and Lady Trefusis is a well-known theme. Very few of the friends who delight to visit them ever suspect at what a cost their happiness was purchased—ORDEAL BY FIRE.

[THE END.]

It is said that the difference in the condition of the throats of public speakers and singers since the introduction of the electric light is most marked. They have less irritation and less weariness during and after their performances. This is accounted for on the theory that gas and other flames dried out the atmosphere, and consumed atmospherical elements necessary to the best condition of the organs. In addition to this, the temperature is more even, and there is less danger from air currents. Where any great number of gas jets are used, the air at the ceiling of a room has the vitality totally burned out of it, and is heated to a very high temperature. An open door or window letting in fresh air creates violent agitation in the air, sometimes sets gusts of air whirling through the room, especially at the somewhat raised portion, where the performers are situated. A specialist in throat troubles thinks that what is known as singers' sore throat may become much less frequent when electric lights are universally adopted.

## IF I BUT KNEW.

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### CHAPTER XXXIX.

DURING the fortnight that followed, George Dalrymple sunned himself each day more and more in Rhoda's presence.

No one noticed it save Honor Morland. He saw no danger, nor did she, in their companionship. In the meantime, the shadow darkened and deepened. It was simply the old story in another form.

They were both young. She was gifted with the sweetest grace that ever a woman possessed; he was brave, courteous, and noble, with the first throb of a mighty passion in his heart.

What usually happens in such cases? He fell desperately in love with Rhoda.

As first George told himself it was pity for her loneliness that actuated him to be always at her side, to make time pass pleasantly for her. He realized when it was too late, that pity had deepened into a mighty love. And he told himself, in his despair, as the truth forced itself upon him, that he loved her.

The truth came to him like a great shock. He went to Owen Courtney, and told him that he must go away at once. It would have been better if he had told him why; but he did not.

"I will not listen to such a thing!" cried Owen. "You have promised to stay until the shooting season, and I will hold you to your word."

In vain he pleaded. But Owen was obdurate. "There is no good reason for your hurrying away," said he.

"Then you want me to stay, no matter what happens!" replied his friend, quickly.

"Yes," replied Owen; and he thought of George's words for many a day afterward.

George tried to reason with himself, saying that it would be better to go. But he was like the moth, who felt insensibly attracted toward the flame, drawing nearer and nearer, until, like the moth, he would perish in it.

After his conversation with Owen, he proceeded to shut his eyes to the danger.

He was a free-lance. No woman's face had ever touched his heart before, and he was frightened at the intensity of the love that thrilled his heart for beautiful Rhoda Courtney.

He would sun himself in her presence for one brief fortnight longer, and then go away. Surely it was not much in a lifetime. He would not deprive himself of the one glimpse of sunshine that had drifted into his life.

Every day found them together.

Although Rhoda did not realise what was in his heart, yet she felt intuitively that there was a great change in George Dalrymple since he had been beneath that roof.

Although he lingered with his feet on the edge of a precipice, yet he stood face to face with the truth—he loved at last with all the passionate strength of his heart and nature.

He said to himself that if marriages were made in Heaven, she was the one woman intended for him; she was the only woman in this world that he could ever love.

If she had only been free, he would have given her his life, his love—all that he had on earth to give.

To make the situation all the more pitiful, he knew that she was a wife in name only to the man whose name she bore; that she was as far removed from him as though she dwelt in an opposite part of the world.

She was so young, so unhappy, he pitied her with all his heart. He was perplexed, agitated.

How he enjoyed the rambles, the rides with her! The sweetest moment of his life was when he could steal upon her unawares.

He saw no danger, and in the meantime the shadow darkened and deepened. Honor Morland watched them with exultant eyes.

"It will end in an elopement," she told herself, triumphantly. "Their hearts are drifting nearer and nearer together, and the end is not far off."

One day, when they were all in the drawing-room after dinner, one of the Montague girls asked George to sing for them.



"I have not sung a song for over a year," he said, laughingly. "I am sure I am entirely out of voice."

"In looking over some music that came to-day, I came across a ballad I remember hearing you sing," said Edith Montague. "Surely you cannot refuse, if I find the music for you!"

"No; I do not see how I can refuse," he returned, laughingly.

He crossed over to the piano with her, took his seat, and ran his fingers lightly over the keys.

He turned pale to the lips when his eyes fell upon the song which pretty Edith Montague had set before him. He knew that the eyes of everyone in the room were upon him. Even Rhoda, who sat in the bay-window, talking to Honor Morland, was watching him.

A moment only he hesitated, then there rose, amid the hum of voices, his deep, rich baritone voice, and it went straight to the heart of everyone present. It was so deep, so rich, so clear, that it awakened a thrill in the souls of all who heard it. Each word fell distinct and startling, filling the room with melody. Those who heard it never forgot the words, nor the handsome man who sang them.

The song was that tenderest and saddest of all songs—"It might have been."

He rose abruptly from the piano, and as he wheeled about, his eyes sought Rhoda. She was looking at him with a startled gaze, a crimson blush burning in both cheeks. He did not know that, as the last line fell from his lips Honor turned suddenly to Rhoda, and whispered--

"Poor fellow! he sang with his heart on his lips, telling of his ruined, desolate life, of his love for you, Rhoda, which he never hopes to have returned!"

That was the first inkling which Rhoda had of the truth. She grew troubled, and her face paled in spite of her effort at self-control. How strange it was that he should love her! But her heart had thrilled so for love.

Why this man should love her, and Owen Courtney should be so indifferent to her, were questions which she called upon Heaven to solve.

She looked at George Dalrymple with wonder and regret. She was sorry if she had awakened even the slightest sentiment of love in his heart. Surely it must be only Honor Morland's imagination, she told herself.

In the meantime, the guests had begun to notice what George believed he had so carefully concealed. They noticed, too, that by slow, almost imperceptible degrees the husband and wife drifted further and further apart.

Every day seemed to make Rhoda more cold and careless, and to leave an added sternness upon the face of Owen and a harshness in his voice.

His marriage had been a bitter regret. It was an effort now to even keep up appearances. He had sealed his misery. There were times when he wished fiercely, miserably, that he could sever that most unhappy bond and set her free.

Not all the wealth and luxury and the army of obsequious servants could make the grand old mansion a home in its true sense.

The young wife plunged into a care-less round of frivolity, with a reckless abandon quite foreign to her nature.

She accepted every invitation that came to her, and gave in return a series of entertainments of so extravagant and magnificent a character that the people around opened their eyes in astonishment, and whispered, it was well that Owen Courtney's pocket was a deep one.

But before long they found something else to comment upon. Wherever Rhoda went, whether she went abroad or entertained at home, at dinner, ball, assembly, there, always closely in her train, might be seen the handsome George Dalrymple.

Gossip began to circulate, slight, and vague at first, but it soon became plainly hinted that Owen Courtney's beautiful young wife was flirting with George Dalrymple--flirting defiantly, desperately recklessly. People wondered in indignant astonishment if her husband was blind or mad.

Almost everybody was discussing the piquant scandal. Even those who had been her guests found something to say, declaring that they had

noticed it from the first, adding this or that detail as the occasion prompted.

They wondered why someone did not drop a hint to the husband. Unsuspecting by nature, and disregarding the formal calls of society whenever he could possibly do so, he very seldom accompanied his wife on the rounds of gaiety on which she had embarked. For weeks neither significant words nor glances came to him.

But he did hear of it at last, and then the blow struck him with terrible effect. It was only a few sentences spoken by a couple of ladies, and pointed with a venom which only a woman's tongue can give, coupling the name of his wife with that of George Dalrymple.

But the import of their words was unmistakable and the shock seemed momentarily to stop the young man's breath. The two scandal-mongers lingered over their gossip with keen delight, not knowing that they were overheard. It was at a garden-party given by Rhoda. Owen had gone into the grounds to enjoy a cigar in a favourite little retreat which few of the guests had as yet discovered. He did not care for the dancing on the lawn, and could not be induced to join the dancers.

Hidden by a group of laurel-bushes, Owen's quick ear caught the words of two young girls walking slowly down the path.

"Have you seen our hostess, young Mrs. Courtney?" asked one of the other. "I have been searching for her everywhere."

"Look for handsome George Dalrymple," returned her companion. "You will surely find her with him."

The rest of the sentence was uttered in a whisper, but Owen Courtney heard every word of it.

## CHAPTER XL.

OWEN flung down the cigar which he had just lighted as soon as the girls passed, and made his way from the place.

He realized the impulse to turn fiercely upon them and demand how they dared speak of his young wife in that manner. It required all his strength of will to keep down his anger.

He passed the two girls on the path a moment later, and though they gave a start, they believed that he had not heard their remarks, for he did not betray his anger in his face.

Owen looked about for his wife. His eyes wandered sharply around as he threaded his way among the dancers. But Rhoda was not visible.

Crossing the lawn he encountered Honor Morland and Captain Edmonds. She was looking her sweetest in pale-blue summer silk half veiled by white lace and pink rosebuds.

He would have passed them by, with a few forced words of pleasantry, but Honor would not have it so.

"You have not danced once this afternoon, Owen," she said; "and a host who does his duty should figure in some of the waltzes at least. Are you looking for a partner now? Shall I find you one?"

"No thanks, Honor," he answered. "I am looking for my--my wife. Do you know where she is?"

"Yes," returned Honor. "I saw her a moment ago. Let me see where it was. Oh, yes; I remember--down by the clump of oaks. She and Mr. Dalrymple had danced four consecutive dances together, and were resting. By the way," she added, with a gay little laugh, and something like a pout on her pretty red lips, "you must tell her not to monopolize Mr. Dalrymple, Owen. It is too bad of her. It does not give a single girl a fair chance, you know."

Honor moved away with the captain after giving him that parting shot, and Owen was not rendered much easier by her last words, although they were apparently gaily and carelessly spoken.

He walked hurriedly to the further end of the grounds, and there, under a huge oak-tree, he caught a glimpse of a filmy white dress.

Advancing, he saw his wife sitting there, with George Dalrymple beside her.

Neither saw him. Rhoda's eyes were fixed upon a crimson rose she was recklessly plucking

to pieces. She seemed to be hardly heeding her companion's words.

George was leaning back against the oak-tree, looking down at the dark, curly head, and he was speaking earnestly in a tone hardly above a whisper.

A handsome couple they looked, and surely like nothing so much as lovers.

Owen realized this, and a feeling of wrath took possession of him. He did not love her; in fact, there were times when he told himself that he hated her with the bitterest kind of hatred; but she bore his name, and she must not be allowed to set the tongues of gossamers wagging.

Owen knew that she did not mean anything by receiving the attentions of handsome George Dalrymple, his friend. She was but a young girl, after all, and she had thoughtlessly allowed herself to drift into this most wretched flirtation.

His thoughts went no deeper, no farther than that; but that was far enough, and for the sake of her good name, this thoughtless, reckless nonsense must be stopped. He trusted her implicitly; yet he felt a mad, unreasonable rage against the two sitting there.

It was well that his will was so strong and his temper so well under control, or he could not have advanced so calmly as he did.

Rhoda was dressed in white. It struck him that she looked very beautiful. But just then her beauty seemed to exasperate and harden her husband toward her.

Rhoda glanced up, and seeing him, started. George appeared a little uncomfortable, but after the first sharp glance, Owen did not look at him, feeling that he could not trust himself to do so. He addressed his wife looking at her with a dark frown on his face.

"Honor told me you were here," he began. "Are you going to dance the next set?"

Her face flushed, her hands trembled. Was he her husband, coming to ask her to dance with him? His next words showed her how mad she had been to cherish such a hope.

"I was going to ask Honor, to dance," he said. "I see there are three couples standing over there ready to dance. It will require one more couple to fill up the set."

With something like haughty pride, she raised her dark head.

"I shall not dance," said Rhoda, in a cold, bitter voice. "I am tired."

George Dalrymple had the grace to laughingly excuse himself. He had been enjoying his *côte à côté*, and the sudden appearance of her husband on the scene was not welcome. Besides, he had noticed that there was something in Owen's face which he did not like.

George did not speak, and Owen waited until he was well out of hearing. The silence lasted so long that Rhoda broke it by petulantly saying--

"As I shall not dance this set, would it not be as well for you to find someone else? The music is just starting."

He did not seem to listen to the remark. His eyes were riveted on the little satin programme, suspended by a little silver cord at her belt, and he saw the initials of George Dalrymple written opposite six or eight dances.

His face grew hard, stern, and rigid. Had he been blind not to have noticed what was going on, when it was so plainly apparent to everyone else?

"I should like to ask something of you," he said, pointing to the card. "I want you to promise me that you will not dance any more with George Dalrymple."

With a feeling of mingled rage and pain he saw that Rhoda turned first pale then scarlet. She drew herself up to her full height and looked at him with a *haut-cœur* which she never knew she possessed.

"May I ask why you make such a request?" she asked, sharply.

"For to-day let it be enough that I make the request. Will you promise me?"

All the spirit that Rhoda possessed was up in arms.

"Certainly not," Rhoda responded. "I should

not dream of breaking an engagement for no reason whatever."

There was a pause, filled only by the strains of distant music.

Paler than usual and with a stern look over-spreading his face, Owen waited for his wife to continue, as she seemed to have something more to say.

"If you objected to your friend dancing with me, you— you should have made the request before the engagements were made."

He looked at her angrily, his fair, handsome face flushing.

"A half-dozen engagements should not have been made," he returned. "People will certainly comment upon it. They are already whispering of my friend's attention to you."

A strange look, which he could not analyse crossed the beautiful face.

"You must stop this gossip," he went on, "or I will take measures to do so. I have made a request of you, and shown you why I have made it. Will you grant it—for your own sake?"

"I refuse!" she repeated. "I am sorry that you do not think me capable of protecting my own name—and yours."

With something like a muttered imprecation on his lips, he turned on his heel, and strode rapidly from her side.

"Fool that I was!" he muttered, clenching his hands together. "To save her honour I married her. But what does she care for my honour?"

The breach between them grew wider than ever now.

Rhoda danced with George, and the tongues of the gossip wagged. If Owen heard, he paid no heed. Strange thoughts were passing through his mind.

All unmindful of what Owen had to say to his wife, George danced with her, and hovered more closely than ever by her side.

He was growing desperate. His stay was drawing to a close. He meant to make the most of the few hours of sunshine and happiness before he turned his back on all that made life worth the living.

At the finish of one of the dances a messenger-boy was seen approaching with a telegram.

"For Mr. George Dalrymple!" he called.

Mechanically George held out his hand. It was a dispatch requiring his immediate presence to attend to some urgent business.

"Have you bad news," asked Rhoda, turning to him; for she saw his face had grown very pale.

"Yes—no," he answered, incoherently, a troubled look coming into his eyes. "I must go away." He did not look at her as he uttered the words. "I must go within the hour," he said, huskily. "Come down by the brook, where we have passed so many happy hours. I should like to say good-bye to you there."

For the moment she hesitated; then seeing the sorrowful look on his face, she quietly allowed him to lead her down the path toward the brook.

In silence they walked through the sunshine, heedless that there were two pairs of eyes following them—Honor Morland's from one part of the grounds, and Owen Courtney's from another.

Honor turned and followed them. That was the beginning of the tragedy that darkened three lives.

## CHAPTER XLII.

SLOWLY Rhoda and George Dalrymple walked together over the beautiful green lawn, Honor Morland creeping like the shadow of fate after them.

At last they stood by the brook—the singing brook whose music they had listened to many a time.

George seated Rhoda in her favourite nook on the mossy stone. For a moment neither of them spoke; then he suddenly caught her little hand in his. Rhoda did not know why she trembled, why her hand grew cold in his clasp.

There was not a cloud in the blue sky overhead. The cool, sweet breeze shook the rose leaves and scattered them on the grass; the leaves of the

oak-trees stirred on the great boughs. A calm, sweet and solemn in its beauty, stole over them.

"Rhoda," he whispered, hoarsely, "did ever a great pity fill your heart for anyone? If so, let pity fill it now for me, for I am in need of it."

"Why?" she asked, looking wonderingly up at him.

"How I shall look back to this hour when I am gone!" he said, brokenly.

"When I am gone!" The words had a sad murmur in them, like the fall of autumn leaves. They pierced the very heart of the girl who heard them.

"When you are gone!" she repeated. "What do you mean?"

"I am going away within the hour," he said.

"The telegram I received calls me back by the first train," he added.

Involuntarily Rhoda drew closer to him, her face paling. Suddenly the light went out of the sun, the glory faded from the blue sky; the music of the birds was hushed; the bitterness of death seemed to have fallen over her heart.

"Going away?" She repeated the words over and over again, but she could not realize their meaning.

"I—I have been so happy, I forgot you would have to go away," she said, slowly.

A great wave of sorrow and desolation swept over her, and the light died from her eyes. For a moment or two it seemed as though she would fall on her face.

Rhoda began to realize that it was all to end—this pleasant friendship, the happy hours, the sunny days, that she had thought would have no ending—all over and done! A shadow went through her.

"Will you come back again soon?" she asked, the hope springing into her heart that he was called away for a day, or perhaps a week.

George looked at the dark eyes bathed in tears which she could not keep back, and he never knew how he resisted the impulse to take her in his arms and kiss those tears away. But he did resist it.

Never did man exercise greater control over himself. He had laid down for his guidance a rule which he deemed was right, and he determined, to adhere to it.

"I am going over to Central America. I may die of fever and never come back," he answered, with passionate pain in his voice. "If I am spared to return, it may not be for years. I will have passed out of your thoughts by that time. You will have forgotten the pleasant hours we spent together, forgotten our rambles through the sunny hours. You will have grown into a woman of the world by that time. You have not begun life yet."

"I feel as though I had finished with it," she murmured.

She did not try to check the words that came throbbing to her lips.

"I wish you had not come into my life only to go out of it," she added, with passionate pain.

He looked at her, and strong man though he was, his lips trembled. She had raised her face to his, and she looked so beautiful, so unhappy, that he turned away with a groan which came from the very depths of his heart.

Honor Morland had crept near enough to hear the first words that had passed between them. She knew that he had received a telegram calling him away. He had either taken Rhoda Courtney down to the brook-side to say good-bye, or to urge her to elope with him. Most likely the latter.

She would go and fetch Owen. He should be a silent witness to the scene; then her vengeance would be complete.

She knew his pride, his temper. She knew he would not raise his voice to utter one word to stay her steps. He would spurn her, he would force her to go.

Honor hurried back to the dancers on the lawn. Owen was standing apart from his guests. She

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to him and laid a little white hand "O! a arm."

with wien," she said, in a voice which trembled with excitement, "I have always been your true friend. If I saw you in danger, my first impulse would be to save you. If I saw an enemy pointing a deadly arrow at your heart, I would try to turn it aside. If I saw a dark cloud hanging over you, my first impulse would be to warn you."

"I anticipate what you are going to say, Honor," he broke in, with an expression of annoyance on his face. "You are going to repeat some gossip to me, and I will say, before you begin, that I do not care to hear it."

Honor Morland looked at him, and a hard, steady light glinted into her blue eyes.

"If you will not heed the words of warning of one who wishes you well, you must submit to the jeers of the whole country. I advise you to go down to the brook-side, where your wife is saying farewell to George Dalrymple, or perhaps she is going with him."

She saw the look that passed over his face as she turned swiftly and hurried away. He could not have answered her if his life had depended upon it. Glancing back over her shoulder, she saw that he had strolled off in the direction which she had indicated.

"He will catch them making love to each other, and then— Ah, well, we shall see!"

Rhoda and George had walked in silence by the brook, and they stood beside it for some moments without speaking; then suddenly George turned toward her.

"Say that you will miss me when I am gone," he murmured, with emotion.

"You know that I shall," she answered. "But for you, my life here would have been very lonely."

"Do you really mean that?" he asked, quickly.

"Yes," she returned, with something very like a sob on her lips.

Impetuously he caught the little white hand that hung by her side.

"Those words will linger in my memory until the day I die!" he cried, huskily. "Rhoda, I am going away. You will never see me in this world again. I shall never come back."

She looked at him with her great dark eyes.

"It breaks my heart to say farewell," he continued, huskily, "for when I leave you, Rhoda, I go out into the darkness of death."

"Oh, do not say that!" she cried.

"Yes, the hour has come when I must tell you," he answered. "It will ease my heart. Only forgive and forget me. Oh, how am I to say good-bye to you?" he asked, sharply, looking, with desperation in his eyes, at the lovely pale face.

"I have lived under the same roof with you. I have been thrown into your society day by day, yet I have kept my secrets in my own heart. Now I am going away, and I will tell you the truth—I love you, Rhoda—I love you!"

He caught her hands in his, and she was too bewildered and dazed to withdraw them.

"You must forgive me!" he cried. "Have pity on me, if my words do not please you!"

She was carried away by his reckless impetuosity, and was too much surprised to interrupt him. She had not even recovered herself sufficiently to withdraw her hands from his. All she knew, in her bewilderment, was, that he was kneeling upon the grass at her feet, with his head bent, and that hot, passionate tears were falling from his eyes.

"I have brought you here because I could not bear the pain any longer. I must speak to you or die. I love you! Ah, Heaven knows how I love you!"

She had no power to stop the torrent of words that fell from his lips.

"You will no doubt wonder how I dare say this to you," he went on, brokenly, "but my answer is—love dares anything. It must express itself in action or words. No mortal can keep it back."

She tried to check him, but it was impossible. "Hush, hush!" was all she could say.

"I know the gulf that lies between us," he went on: "I realize that it can never be bridged



over. If I had met you first, I feel all would have ended differently. You would have loved me as I love you. I feel it—I know it."

At that moment Owen, who had hurried down the path at the suggestion of Honor Morland, arrived upon the scene.

Only the tall lilac bushes sheltered him from the two who stood by the brook-side. For a moment he was horrified at what he saw and heard. He stood fairly rooted to the spot. His first impulse was to dash in upon them, fling George Dalrymple to the earth, and beat his very life out.

His next impulse was to rush to the house for his revolver, return with it, and shoot his false friend before his guilty wife's eyes.

He acted upon the latter impulse, turned on his heel, and a moment later, white as death, he dashed into the house and ran up the rear stairway to his room.

He did not love the girl who bore his name, but she should learn, even if it were at the cost of a life, what it meant to drag his name, his honour, through the mire.

## CHAPTER XLII.

It was a strange scene upon which the sunlight shone that afternoon—the young girl who was standing by the brook-side white and dismayed, and the handsome young man who was bidding farewell to all he loved best on earth.

He should have gone away without uttering the words that filled his heart. He knew, he realized that now. He was fully aware that he had taken Rhoda by surprise, and he had poured out his passionate, hopeless love for her before she realized what he was saying.

Rhoda was quickly recovering herself. At first the shock had been so great and the surprise so complete, that she was unable to understand it.

Her first feeling was one of indignation that he should have dared to touch her, to take her hand, to force her by the power of his will to come down to the brook with him, where he dared make love with her.

Rhoda's face flushed with anger, her eyes grew proud and cold, and her lips scornful.

"I wonder," she said, coldly, "that you had the temerity to say what you did."

She was trembling from head to foot; she had grown white as one dead.

"I did so because I love you," he answered, hoarsely. "I must tell you again, though a thousand deaths stand in my way. Is it wrong in this last hour to say what I feel? When I first saw you, I must say that your face filled my soul. I heard you speak, and your voice filled my heart. I had never loved before. I was a lonely man. I would have loved you better than the cold, proud man whom you married. I would have died for you. For one word of love, I would gladly die at your feet this instant. Do not condemn me because we have met too late!"

He saw her face pale, saw the angry light deepen in her dark eyes.

"I cannot understand," she said, "how you have the presumption to speak to me in this way. I have never by word or look given you the least cause for addressing me in such a fashion. Let me hear no more of this; your love insults me," she added in a clear, high voice. "Nothing can justify it."

She had stung his pride at last. He had sprung to his feet, and a hot blush came to his face.

"If I am presumptuous," he cried, "you have led me on to it. Why have you given me so much of your society? You have given me the sweetest smile woman ever gave to man. You have spent hours with me rambling about through the flower-strewn garden and over the grounds. You must have known that it could end in but one way—that I was only human, and that I would love my heart to you. You have owned to your friends that if you had met me first you could have loved me. Such ardent love as mine would touch any heart. You do not, you cannot love Owen Courtney as you do me. Burst the fetters that bind you to him. He does not love you, he scorns you. Fly with me. I will

love and cherish you till the day I die. I will live only for you. Oh, Rhoda, it is your future and mine I ask you to settle! Pity me, pity yourself. Let us go. There are places where we can live, each for the other. My carriage will soon be at the door. No one will notice our departure in this throng. Only one word from you and you are mine, and we will be happy—only one word."

Rhoda summoned all her strength—more strength than that softly rounded figure had ever seemed to possess. She wrenched away her hands; her face flushed scarlet; her eyes blazed. "You villain!" she cried in a voice shaking with emotion. "leave me at once before I summon aid to turn you out of the grounds!"

Her words went home, struck to the very core of his heart. He gazed at her steadily as she stood there in the sunlight, her beautiful face so proud, so cold; and as he looked, the love that filled his heart turned slowly to undying hate. His love died a violent death. It was a moment before he spoke.

"While I live I shall never forget those cruel words!" he said, huskily. "I have said that I love you, I have told you that I worship you."

One gleam of tenderness or pity would have brought him to her feet again.

"I have lavished such love on you as might have made any other woman happy, and you have nothing to give me in return for my life's love but the assurance that my love is an insult to you."

"It is but an insult," she echoed. And again they stood in silence, looking at each other.

"You have called me a villain," he cried, "and I will not soon forget that."

She turned upon him, and was about to walk up the path, when he caught hold of her dress.

"I—I thought I was stronger," he cried, hoarsely, his rage overpowering him. "Have you not one word of farewell to say to me?" he cried. "Will you leave me like this, witnessing my humiliation and despair? If you will speak but one kind word, it will be a crumb of comfort to me in the days that are to come."

"You do not deserve one kind word," she answered, idly, her anger increasing. And as she uttered the words, a look of scorn passed over her face.

Again there was silence between them, broken only by the ripple of the water and the rustling of the leaves overhead. She drew her dress from him, her anger increasing at each moment.

"Then this is good-bye!" he cried.

She did not deign him another glance, but sped up the path and into the house, never stopping until she had reached the seclusion of her own room.

Once there she recalled the past. She had drifted along with the tide until she had almost found herself precipitated into a whirlpool. She had unconsciously drifted into this friendship with her husband's friend.

What if anything of what had happened should get to the ears of her husband?

The very thought terrified her. Looking back, she could not see that she had done wrong. Thinking only of George Dalrymple as her husband's friend and as their guest, and that it was her duty to amuse him, no wonder that she had not noticed his growing passion for her.

Surely she was not to blame; she had not encouraged him by word, look, or deed. He had been so kind, so pleasant, that she had passed more time in his society than she was aware of, and had looked to him for amusement. But she had meant no wrong; her heart was so filled with love for Owen Courtney that there was no room for anyone else in it.

She had thought quite as much of Honor Morland's friendship as she had that of George Dalrymple. She had said to herself that after Honor left, the world could grow dark to her, and she would almost die of loneliness. She had thought of George Dalrymple in the same way.

"Thank Heaven he is gone!" she panted holding her little hands tightly over her heart.

A harsh laugh, that was horrible to hear followed her as she had turned from George Dalrymple. She did not know that from that moment his was a changed life. He had but one object in

the dark future that stretched out before him, and that was to take revenge upon the beautiful girl who had drawn him on to love her, and then rejected him with such bitter scorn. He vowed to himself, as he turned on his heel with a curse on his lips, that she should regret that hour. He would give his whole life up to vengeance upon her.

Perhaps if she had been loved by her husband, if his protection and shelter had been thrown around her, this would never have happened.

But no one knew better than himself how Owen Courtney disliked this fair girl whom he had wedded. George had said to himself over and over again, as they were walking toward the brook that Owen would not care if she were to fly with him; indeed, he would be only too glad, if she went from him, that he might secure his freedom, as he had never cared for her.

He left the grounds by a circuitous path that led to the road. He could not look upon any other face, hear any other voice, after what had passed. He feared that he would meet Owen, and that he would notice at once that something unusual had happened. He would not have dared to tell him that he had so far forgotten himself as to fall in love with Rhoda—his wife.

He knew well the Courtney temper and the Courtney pride. He knew well that it would end in a duel, and he did not care to face such a catastrophe.

His whole nature had undergone a complete change. He had come there a bright, laughing, happy man, showering his smiles and his gallantry among all ladies alike. Now he crept from his friend's house a hardened, vindictive man, feeling at war with the whole world.

He had heard of men whose lives had changed in a single night—his had changed in a single hour. Rhoda had drawn him on to love her, and then she had flung his love back in his face. She had spurned his worshipful devotion, preferring to remain beneath the roof of the man who detested her.

How strange life was! Each was playing at cross-purposes with the other.

No, he could not bid Owen Courtney good-bye. He would send him a telegram from the first station he reached, saying that he had been called away suddenly.

He vowed to himself that the time would come when Rhoda should turn to him for refuge, and, like Honor Morland, he vowed that he would part Rhoda and Owen Courtney.

## CHAPTER XLIII.

ALTHOUGH scarcely five minutes had elapsed since Owen dashed into the house in search of his

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revolver, when he returned to the brook-side neither his wife nor George Dalrymple was to be seen.

His rage was so great that he could scarcely contain himself. In his present state of mind he did not dare return to his guests, lest his emotion should betray him.

He paced up and down in the most desperate rage, under the shadow of the great trees.

He blamed himself that he had made such a confidant of George Dalrymple and he gnashed his teeth when he thought how his friend had betrayed his confidence.

He thought they were planning an elopement; but he would nip that in the bud.

The woman to whom he had given his name should not disgrace him. He determined upon that as he hurried up a rear stairway to his wife's apartments to verify his suspicions.

To his utter surprise, as he flung open the door he saw her sitting by the window. She sprang to her feet, looking at him with widely distended eyes.

It was the first time that her husband had ever crossed the threshold of her apartments.

He entered the room, closed the door behind him, and stood with folded arms before her.

Husband and wife looked at each other. It was he who broke the awful silence. He strode up to her, and seized her wrist in a vice-like grasp.

"There is little use in making a preliminary speech," he cried, hoarsely. "I will come to this point at once!"

His face was ghastly, his lips trembled with uncontrollable rage.

Rhoda, pale, terrified, wondering, gazed at him with undiminished terror in her eyes.

"What is it?" she gasped.

"You guilty woman!" cried Owen—"you cruel, guilty woman, I have interrupted you in your preparation for flight, it seems!"

His stern face, the anger that shone in his eyes, and the harsh voice frightened her. She shrank back as though he had struck her. Her lips parted as though she would speak; but all sound died away on them.

"You chose a propitious time," he sneered! "but I have come here to say this to you—you shall not disgrace me before the whole country! Stir from this room at your peril. If you do, it will be over my dead body!"

His meaning suddenly dawned upon her. He must have learned in some way, of George Dalrymple's mad infatuation for her, and imagined that she was about to elope with him. A spasm of pain crossed Rhoda's lovely pale face.

"It is time," said Owen, "that we came to a clear understanding. In every way you have deceived me! I have been fatally betrayed! Your shameless flirtation has tarnished my name and lowered my position! I am ashamed to look men in the face! Where is he?" he demanded, looking about him, as though he expected to see George Dalrymple in the room.

"Down by the brook," she faltered.

Owen laughed a harsh, satirical laugh.

"He must have seen me coming while he waited there for you, and fled from my wrath." He turned on his heel. "I repeat, if you stir from this room until I give you leave, it will end in a tragedy!"

In his anger, he did not see that he was trampling underfoot a noble heart. If she had been able to calmly explain to him just what had occurred, she might have been saved. She attempted to speak, but he held up his hand.

"Not one word!" he cried. "I will not listen!"

He turned suddenly, hurried from the room, closed the door after him, and went quickly to his library, where he could be alone.

Once there, he gave vent to his rage. Outside, the sound of music and laughter floated to him from the guests enjoying the garden-fête.

He paced his library with swift, unsteady steps, clinching his hands, gnashing his teeth. He was nearly insane with the intensity of his emotion.

He had given his name, brought to his home, introduced to his friends, a woman who was ready to forsake him—so soon.

What could be worse! He did not know how

very little she had been so blame; how she shrunk from George Dalrymple, and his love; how true she really was to him; how secretly she held her marriage vow; how easy it would have been to win her heart.

Rhoda left alone, reeled into the nearest chair. She shook as if in an ague; she was cold, and her head reeled. Her keen pain and agony kept her from fainting.

She tried to imagine her future life. What was Owen about to do? Her future was now ruined, sacrificed. Owen had been cold and indifferent to her before, now he hated her.

He said she was to remain in that room until he should return. She flung herself face downward upon the floor. He had called her guilty and cruel; he had vented his rage upon her. Her brain was dizzy with the unusual excitement.

To her ears also came up the sound of revelry from her guests—happy laughter, gay voices, and joyous strains of music—while she, their hostess, in the abandonment of her misery, was lying on the floor of her boudoir, her husband's angry voice in her ears, the mark of his cruel grasp on her arm.

She thought of that chill grey dawn when she had crept to her mother's grave and sung herself down upon it and prayed to Heaven to let her die.

Great as her sorrow was in that hour, it was as nothing when compared to this. Her head ached so terribly that she felt she could never raise it again. The strains of music and the sound of voices seemed to recede further and further.

When Honor Morland gilded into Rhoda's room to find out what was going on, to see whether Rhoda had really eloped, she found her in a deep swoon. She did not call the servants, but set about reviving her herself.

Rhoda lay white and still as one dead. Above her bent Honor Morland, half terrified at the result of her work. Very soon her labours were rewarded, and Rhoda opened her large dark eye.

"Honor, Honor," she murmured, catching at the arms of her false friend, her teeth chattering.

The blinding tears that now fell from Rhoda's eyes were a mercy sent directly from Heaven, for they saved the hapless young wife from going mad.

"Something has gone wrong with you, my dear," said Honor, in her sweetest, most cooling voice. "Tell me what it is, Rhoda, dear. Let me console and comfort you."

Another fit of sobbing more violent than the first, and Rhoda threw herself into the arms of her treacherous friend, sobbing out,—

"Oh! Honor, I must tell someone. But I dare tell no one but you! Something so dreadful has happened, my dear friend, that it is almost driving me to madness!"

In a voice that shook with emotion, she proceeded to confide to her enemy what had happened down by the brookside, adding that her husband had discovered it in some way, and accused her of encouraging George Dalrymple.

"Even if you had given him encouragement, no one could have blamed you," Honor said in a soft purring voice, "for your husband's neglect has been noticeable by everyone!"

"But I did not encourage him!" cried Rhoda, in agony. "He was pleasant company; but I thought no more of him, even though I spent so much of my time in his society, than I did of Captain Edmunds, or any of the other guests beneath this roof. Oh! I do wish I were dead—I do—I do!"

In this exaggerated feeling of one ill in body and in mind, in a state of nervous tension, a true friend would have shown the unhappy Rhoda that her position was not so desperate and hopeless as she imagined. Matters could not, however, be carried to an extremity without an explanation.

"He bid me to remain here until he should return," sobbed Rhoda. "What do you suppose he means to do?"

"Do you really want my honest opinion?"

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asked Honor, with a steely glitter in her blue eyes.

"Yes!" said the young wife, anxiously, fairly holding her breath in suspense.

"Well, then, my dear, if you must have it, here it is: I, who know the fierce temper of the Courtenays, say to you that I think he intends to call all the guests here, to openly denounce you before them, and then turn you away from his house!"

The face of the girl-wife who listened grew ghastly.

"Oh, that would kill me, Honor!" she said in a voice that sounded full of agony, full of despair. "Oh! pray advise me. What would you do if you were me? Tell me; you are wiser than I am. Oh, what would you do if you were me?"

"I would never stay beneath this roof to face his anger," said Honor, her eyes glistening. "I would gather up what money and jewels I could lay my hands on, and run away—go as far away as possible."

"Would you?" cried Rhoda in a hushed, awful voice.

"Yes," advised Honor, firmly. "And every moment of delay brings you nearer and nearer to face the terrible ordeal that I am sure he intends to mete out to you!"

Rhoda rose suddenly to her feet.

"I will do as you advise, Honor," she whispered, her dark eyes filled with terror. "I will fly at once!"

(To be continued.)

## FACETIE.

"YOUNG BROWN is an awfully smart fellow." "Yes, I guess he is. My brother can't get into his debt."

WALKER: "Did you say your wife's a member of a secret society?" Talker: "It was secret before she joined."

"Do the police suspect anybody of the murder?" "Yes." "Whom do they suspect?" "Oh, that they don't know."

"You Americans take a humorous view of everything." "Yes. That's why we call our servants 'helps.'"

A YOUTHFUL FINANCIER: "Daddy, do you think I might have sixpence, so that I could give a penny to that poor blind man?"

"I see by the papers that Footlights travels under his wife's management." "So do most men, only they don't advertise it."

"WILLIE, what are you adding down the balusters for?" said the mother. "To make trousers for poor orphan boys," said Willie.

HAWKINS: "So you sent for a doctor. Does he think you will be out soon?" Robbins: "I imagine so. He said he wished I had sent for him sooner."

MRS. SMITH: "Yes, of course my husband has plenty of money now, but he was pretty hard up when he married me." Mrs. Brown: "He must have been."

"PAPA: 'Isn't he a wonderful contortionist?' Mamma: 'Yes; I wish you could do that.' Papa: 'Why?' Mamma: 'I think it might amuse the baby.'"

LANDLADY: "I believe in letting coffee boil for thirty minutes; that's the only way to get the good out of it." Oiborder: "Well, you've succeeded admirably, madam."

MRS. SMYTHE: "What would you be if I hadn't money?" Smythe: "Well, what would you be?" "I!" "Yes, you! You wouldn't be Mrs. Smythe!"

"I HAVE a doctor's certificate here that I cannot sing to-night," said the prima donna. What! "roared the manager. "I'll give you a certificate that you never could sing."

"No, I can't give you a job. I've as many hands now as I can find work for." Tired Tim: "Well, that needn't stand in your way, gov'nor. The little I'd do wouldn't make no difference."

A CERTAIN Benedict was in the habit of troubling his father-in-law with complaints about his wife's behaviour. "Really, this is too bad," cried the irascible old gentleman one day, on hearing of some of his daughter's delinquencies. "If I hear any more complaints I will disinherit her." There were no more complaints.

A GENTLEMAN who had been allured by the announcement of a "quiet country hotel," came down the morning after his arrival and made complaint that his boots had been outside his door all night, and until eight o'clock that morning, and "nobody had touched them." The landlord, who, in his shirt-sleeves, was tipped back in a chair and picking his teeth with a jack-knife, beamingly remarked, "Law bless ye, ye might have left yer pus out there all night; nobody would have touched it. Honest critters daown here, I tell ye."

CLARA: "Well, aunt, have your photographs come from Mr. Snappeschotte's?" Miss Maydeval (angrily): "Yes, and they went back, too, with a note expressing my opinion of his impudence." Clara: "Gracious! What was it?" Miss Maydeval: "Why, on the back of every picture were these words: 'The original of this is carefully preserved.'"

MRS. HAYSEED (on her first visit to town): "One would think that big store I was just in would do considerable business, but I suppose most of the crowd jest looks around and goes out agin. My! Wasn't there a commotion when I bought something and paid for it." Hostess: "A commotion!" Mrs. Hayseed: "Mercy! yes. Jest as quick as that clerk-girl got my money, she began yelling 'cash 'like mad—and half-a-dozen little errand boys came rushin' up to see it."

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## SOCIETY.

THE German Emperor's new yacht *Iduna* is really the American yacht *Yampa*, which his Majesty recently purchased, but her name has been changed since she arrived at Southampton from New York.

LITTLE Prince Edward of York is a great favourite at Windsor—and, indeed, he endears himself to everybody—for he is not only a singularly sweet-dispositioned child, but he is also a very bright and merry little person.

THE Queen will be joined at Cimex, in all probability, by the Duchess of York, who will remain abroad some weeks. The Prince of Wales will go on to Copenhagen from Homburg, and escort the Princess of Wales and his daughters home.

THE Duke of Coburg has been very unwell since his departure from Egypt, and it is understood that he is much annoyed and worried about the differences which have arisen between the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess of Hesse, which threaten to lead to their permanent separation.

THE Empress Frederick has given an oil-painting of the late Emperor Frederick to the Prussian Guard-Regiment, which is an exact pendant to those portraits of the old Emperor Wilhelm and the present Emperor already possessed by the regiment. The portrait, which is half length, and depicts the late Emperor in the parade uniform of the Guard-Regiment with the orange band of the Order of the Black Eagle, and the Order pour le Mérite, and the Iron Cross, is the work of Anton Werner.

A STATUE in memory of the late Princess Alice is to be erected in Darmstadt. It is now nearing the twentieth anniversary of her Royal Highness's death. English women are to be asked to take an interest in the scheme, and there is no doubt that many will be only too glad to do so. Princess Alice will always be lovingly remembered here. She was so good and noble a woman, and lived a life that was far from smooth and pleasant so uncomplainingly, even cheerily and brightly. Then she was devoted to her father in his last fatal illness—strange that she should have died on the anniversary of his death, seventeen years later—and so great a comfort to the Queen in the early times of her Majesty's great grief.

PRINCESS WALDEMAR OF DENMARK (*née* Marie of Orleans) is a good friend to the poor, despite her numerous eccentricities. She is, moreover, a very excellent and industrious artist. For the benefit of the poor of Copenhagen the Princess has arranged with her own hands an exhibition of her own pictures, two hundred and fifty in all, chiefly flowers, fruit, animals, and birds. Some of the specimens are equal to any by first-rate professional artists, for the Princess is not only very talented, but has had, of course, the best masters. The exhibition is drawing great crowds, and bringing in a nice sum of money.

THE train which conveyed the Queen from Cherbourg to Nice was provided by the Lyons Company, excepting only the immense double saloon in which her Majesty and Princess Beatrice travelled, which belongs to the Queen. There were eleven carriages, including a *salon de famille* for Princess Christian, and several *salons-lits*, in one of which the two younger sons of Princess Beatrice travelled.

THE Empress Elisabeth of Austria-Hungary loves roses above all other flowers. All sorts and conditions of roses meet with her favour. The Empress, at Achilleon, in her favourite cage for the Queen of Flowers, has a "rose park," as she delights to call it, of every known species, and at her Lides Schloss, outside Vienna, no fewer than four hundred thousand standard rose-trees grace the park. Trellised roses vault in many a walk in these secluded gardens, to which the public are denied admittance. Out at Schonbrunn, too, the famous and historical rose plantations have, at her Majesty's behest, undergone considerable enlargement, and the august lady is alleged to have said quite recently, in her greed, "Vast forests of them would please me most of all."

## STATISTICS.

It is not generally known that 60 per cent. of wood may be converted into liquid.

THE total length of the world's telegraph system has now reached 4,908,921 miles.

THE highest masts of sailing vessels are from 180ft. to 180ft. high, and spread from 60,000 to 100,000 square feet of canvas.

COINS of low denominations circulate very rapidly; thus it is calculated that every penny in circulation changes hands a dozen times a week.

THE daily water supply of London is 175,149,188 gallons, of which about 90,000,000 gallons are drawn from the Thames, and the rest from the Lea and from various artesian wells.

## GEMS.

LIFE is like a nutmeg-grater. You have to rub up against the rough side of it to accomplish anything.

SOME of the best lessons we ever learn we learn from our mistakes and failures. The error of the past is the wisdom and success of the future.

GRATITUDE consists adequately in these two things; first, that it is a debt; and, second, that it is such a debt as is left to every man's ingenuity whether he will pay or no.

THE right human bond is that which unites soul with soul; and only they are truly akin who consciously live in the same world, who think, believe, and love alike, who hope for the same things, aspire to the same ends.

WHAT comfort, what strength, what economy there is in order—material order, intellectual order, moral order! Order means light and peace, inward liberty and free command over one's self. Order is power.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

COTTAGE PUDDING.—One cup of milk, one-half cup of sugar, one egg, two tablespoonfuls of melted butter, one teaspoonful of baking powder sifted with one pint of flour. Bake half-an-hour and serve with liquid sauce.

CREAMED BEETS.—Boil four nice beets until tender, peel and chop until fine. Put in baking-mould and turn over cream until covered; sprinkle salt and pepper, and bits of butter over them, and bake until thoroughly heated. Remove from oven; add two tablespoonfuls of vinegar to a pint of the mixture.

BANGOR PUDDING.—Moisten one cup and a third of biscuit crumbs with boiling water (it will take about one cup). When the crumbs are cool, add one pint of milk, one-third a cup of treacle, one egg, and half a pound of raisins, seeded and cut in pieces. Steam eight hours, and cool in the mould.

EGGS WITH MUSHROOMS.—Slice the mushrooms from cans into halves. Stew ten minutes in a little butter, seasoned with pepper and salt, and a very little water. Drain, put the mushrooms into a pie-dish; break enough eggs to cover them over the top; pepper, salt, and scatter bits of butter over them; stew with breadcrumbs and bake until the eggs are "set." Serve in the dish.

PARSIF BALLS.—Maak one pint of boiled parsnips. Add two tablespoonfuls of butter, one tablespoonful of salt, half a saltspoon white pepper, two tablespoonfuls of milk and one beaten egg. Mix all the ingredients except the egg, stir the fire until the mixture bubbles, add the egg; set away to cool. When cold make into balls and brown in lard or bacon drippings.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

THE tantawa, a 9in-long lizard of New Zealand, is said to be the most sluggish animal in the world.

IN one of the African oases about 600 artesian wells have been opened successfully along the course of a subterranean river.

THERE is such a variety of climate in Costa Rica, that by going a few miles north or south of a given point any kind of climate may be enjoyed.

A NET of spiders' webs is being manufactured to be used as an experimental covering for a navigable balloon by the French military authorities in Madagascar.

THE bed of the Atlantic from 400 to 2,000 fathoms is covered with an ooze, or very fine chalky deposit, consisting for the most part of minute broken shells.

BOTTLES now are being made of paper under a German patent. They are for use particularly on shipboard, where heavy weather works havoc among glass receptacles.

HELMETS made of aluminium, to be covered with waterproof cloth of various colours, according to the branch of the service wearing it, are about to be adopted in the French Army.

RECENT experiments to discover the best fire-resisting materials for the construction of doors are said to have proved that wood covered with tin is better than solid iron.

IN Zululand, when the moon is at the full, objects are distinctly visible at as great a distance as seven miles. By starlight one can see to read print with ease.

ACCORDING to an eminent professor, under the action of sun, air, and water the loftiest mountains are being gradually reduced to a dead level. The great Sahara desert is an example of the last stage of this process.

A FISH never renews its scales. A wound may heal up and be covered over with a thick protective skin, but nature provides the fish with only one suit of scale armour, and leaves lost out of that are never restored.

A CENTRAL African lake, which, when it was first discovered 40 years ago, was 180 miles by 30 broad, is reported by recent travellers to have closed up completely. The bed of the lake is now a plain covered with thick woods.

IN 1877 Falcon Island, in the Friendly Group, began as a smoking shoal. Ten years later it was a volcanic island about three hundred feet high and over one and a-half miles long. Now it is disappearing.

THE spiders that spin webs are in an infinite minority compared with those which do not. Ground spiders, as the non-spinners are called, abound everywhere, and depend on agility and swiftness of foot to catch their prey.

PAPER made from wood pulp decays comparatively soon, and the alarm lately expressed lest modern books fall to last more than a hundred years or so has some basis. But if the resin be chemically extracted from the wood pulp, it is said to be trustworthy for enduring use.

"FLOATING bogs" are often found in American lakes. The bogs nourish a large number of plants, shrubs, and even small trees, as well as little animals. They drift about with the winds, and sometimes get caught in sheltered coves, where they remain and become fixed to the bottom.

WHEN one sees smoke hanging from a chimney, with tendency to sink to the ground, it indicates that the atmosphere is light—in fact, too light to float the smoke. When the smoke rises from the chimney, it indicates a heavy atmosphere. A column of smoke is not a barometer, for a barometer simply records the pressure of the atmosphere. When the atmosphere is light and the smoke settles, the pressure on the mercury is light and the column falls, indicating a storm. When the atmosphere is heavy and the smoke rises, the pressure is greater and the column rises, indicating fair weather.





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NOT NECESSARY

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Soap . . .

is used; it does nearly all the work itself. Just rub a little on the clothes, roll them up and put them back in the water. Then when you take them out you will see that

Sunlight Soap does the work.

#### NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

**JACK.**—You try paying.  
**OSBY.**—It must depend on the cook.  
**A. H.**—Gasp, both before and after.  
**ANNA.**—Any person may open a school.  
**BERTHA.**—You could not possibly make it for yourself.  
**LOUELL.**—We neither give addresses nor answer by post.  
**WOMAN.**—The best course will be to pay the demand.  
**A. L.**—We most emphatically decline to comply with your request.  
**CONSTANT READER.**—You must either give up the machine or pay for it.  
**GARY.**—Fourpenny pieces are no longer minted, they have been "called in."  
**ONE WHO WANTS TO KNOW.**—The father cannot claim the custody of an illegitimate child.  
**VANCE.**—You are not quite legally in continuing to sign the name you have always used and been known by.  
**A. S.**—If the piece broken off shortens the tube a new one must be got; we doubt if the thing is worth the cost of repairing.  
**GREEN.**—The presence of a third party is not absolutely necessary for the protection of young women, but is always preferable.  
**INGRAM.**—The rule is that letters under half-an-ounce sent from soldiers are carried for a penny to all parts of the British Empire.  
**P. S.**—If the boy is under thirteen he must remain at school until he has passed the standard fixed by the school board of the district.  
**D. D.**—A gamekeeper cannot legally shoot a dog in pursuit of game; if he does, he renders himself liable in compensation to the owner.  
**DUBOIS.**—By all means let your son join a volunteer force. The discipline will help to teach him manly habits of respect and obedience.  
**GERALD.**—Amsterdam, Holland, is built upon piles driven into the ground. It is intersected by numerous canals, crossed by nearly 300 bridges.  
**B. H.**—An action for breach of promise cannot be maintained against a minor should he plead his infancy—that is, being under twenty-one years of age.

**GRACE.**—We should think that a regular system of massage treatment would be the most beneficial. You should be careful to drink very little tea and coffee.

**RALEIGH.**—Sir Colin Campbell went through the whole of the Peninsular war; being severely wounded at the siege of San Sebastian and the passage of the Bidassoa.

#### THE OTHER WORLD.

We stand upon the heights and gaze  
In rapturous content,  
As light with shadow softly plays  
O'er land and firmament,  
Till in a dream of mellow haze  
The earth and sky are blent.

Heaven seems, we say, not far away,  
And we could reach its gate  
By journeying this one summer day  
Before the evening's late,  
Just o'er the hills, and we can stray  
Within its fair estate.

We wait by stinging ocean waves,  
That from the shore expand,  
All fresh beneath the rosy dawn,  
At first from God's own hand,  
And look to catch a gleam of sails  
Just in from morning land.

And when at night a path of light  
The moon makes on the sea—  
An open door where One in white  
Seems beckoning to me—  
We could walk forth without afright,  
Like Him of Galilee.

But that sweet other world we know  
Close round about us lies,  
Since love is heaven, nor would we go  
Beyond the happy skies.  
God gives us friends to love, and so  
This is our Paradise.

**DETREMBED.**—The best plan would be for you to consult a specialist. The cost would not be much, and you would know that you were absolutely safe from disfigurement.

**IN NEED OF ADVICE.**—Promises of all sorts should be kept whenever it is possible to do so. Especially is it incumbent upon young married people to begin life by observing the strictest punctiliousness in regard to truth. Married life on any basis other than the most perfect truthfulness is likely to be full of snares and pitfalls.

**ADA.**—Wash well and carefully so as not to injure the plat with soap and water, using a sponge, and then wash off soap with plenty of clean water, after which sponge well with pure lemon juice and expose to the sun; this may have to be done two or three times before the bleaching is perfected.

**S. D.**—We are unable to say how you can possibly get to New York without paying for your passage in the ordinary way, unless you are fortunate enough to obtain an engagement as under-stewardess; with that view, seek out the official known as the shore steward, and state your difficulty to him.

**CHARICE.**—Peel six large apples, scoop out the upper half of the cores; place them upright in an earthen dish. Put into each cavity one walnut broken in small pieces, two teaspoonfuls of sugar, a pinch of cinnamon, one teaspoonful of butter, sprinkle with sugar, and pour in the dish one cup of cold water. Bake for twenty-five minutes in a quick oven.

**LOVER OF THE "LONDON READER."**—Take one ounce of clear colourless resin, melt it in an iron vessel, taking care that it does not burn, when well melted allow it to slightly cool, but not get hard, then add enough turpentine to ensure its remaining in liquid when cold. Do not use it till quite cold; the colour you use it with must be ground in oil.

**O. F.**—Soften the fat by pounding, then put it in a crock and heat in hot water bath; when thoroughly melted stir well and let it remain standing in the warm water till cold; the coarser fibre will fall to the bottom, remove that, and put the cleared part in a mortar with the other ingredient and pound well together, then heat together, and keep mixing till thoroughly amalgamated and cool.

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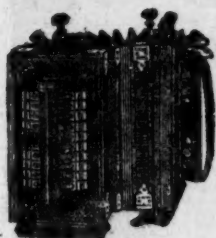
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